

THE DIAL

OCTOBER 1923

THE MAN WITH THE FLOWER IN HIS MOUTH

A Dialogue

BY LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Translated From the Italian by Arthur Livingston

CHARACTERS

THE MAN WITH THE FLOWER IN HIS MOUTH
A CUSTOMER (WITH TIME ON HIS HANDS)

Twice, during the Dialogue, a melancholy woman, in a black dress, and an old hat with drooping feathers, will appear round the corner.

An avenue, lined with trees; electric lights gleaming through the foliage. On either side, the last houses of a street crossing the avenue. Among the houses to the left, a miserable all-night café, with tables and chairs on the sidewalk. In front of the houses on the right a street-lamp lighted. Astride the angle made by the two walls of the house to the left, which has a front both on the street and on the avenue, a street-lamp, also lighted. It is shortly after midnight. Faintly, from a distance, comes at intervals the thrumming of a mandolin. As the curtain rises, The Man With the Flower in His Mouth is seated at one of the tables, silently observing the Customer, who, at a neighbouring table, is sipping a mint frappée through a straw.

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Ah!—I was just going to say! . . .
So you are a good-natured sort of a fellow. . . . You lost
your train?

THE CUSTOMER: By less than a minute. I get to the station—
and there it is—just pulling out!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: You might have caught it by running!

THE CUSTOMER: I suppose I might. It's absurd, I know. If I
hadn't been all cluttered up with a dozen packages, more or less
—huh! worse than a pack-horse! . . . Oh, these women!
. . . One errand after another—world without end! Why,
it took me three minutes, after I got out of my taxi, to get my
fingers through the strings of all those packages! Two on every
finger!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: I'd like to have seen you! . . . You
know what I would have done? I would have left the blamed
things in the carriage!

THE CUSTOMER: And when you got home—eh? . . . How
about the old woman—and my girls—not to mention those
from the neighbourhood!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Let 'em shriek! . . . I'd have en-
joyed it—I would!

THE CUSTOMER: Guess you don't know what it's like to have a
brood of women with you on a vacation in the country!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Oh, I guess I do—in fact, I say so be-
cause I do. . . . (*A pause.*) They all say they won't need
to take a blessed thing!

THE CUSTOMER: And you think they stop there? According to
them, they go to the country to save money. . . . Well, the
moment they get to some place out there, in the backwoods—
the uglier it is, the dirtier it is, the more they insist on dressing
up in all their Sunday togs. Oh—women, my dear sir! . . .
But, after all, dressing is their profession! . . . "The next
time you run into town, dear, I wish you'd stop in at So-and-
So's. And then, if you don't mind, dear, on the way back—no
trouble, is it, really?—will you stop at my dress-maker's and—"
. . . and they're off! . . . "But how am I going to get all
that done in three hours?" you say. . . . "Oh, that's easy,
take a taxi!" . . . And the worst of it is, that in my hurry
to get away, I forgot to take the keys of my house, here in town.

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Ah—that's a good one! . . . And so—

THE CUSTOMER: I left that pile of bundles in the parcel room at the station. Then I went to dinner in a restaurant. Then, to get my temper back, to the theatre. . . . Hot? . . . Hot was no name for it! On coming out, I say to myself: What next? . . . Midnight. . . . And the next train leaves at 4 a. m.—three hours left for a bit of a nap. . . . Not worth the money. . . . So here I am! . . . This place doesn't shut up, I hope—

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Never shuts up, this place. (*A pause.*) So you left your bundles in the parcel room—eh?

THE CUSTOMER: Why not? Safe, aren't they? All pretty well tied up!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: No—no—I didn't mean that. . . . (*A pause.*) Well tied up, eh? Oh, I imagine so. Boys in the shops these days can wrap a bundle up quick as scat. (*A pause.*) What hands they have! . . . Here's a long strip of doubled paper—pink—with wavy lines—Ah! a sight for sore eyes! . . . How smooth it is! You'd almost like to put your face on it to feel the cool! And they roll it out, there on the counter, as nice as you please! And they put your cloth in the middle of it, all neatly folded up. First, they take the back of the hand, and they raise one edge of the paper. Then they bring the other hand down from above, and—how clever and graceful they are! They fold down one strip—a strip they don't really need—just for the art of the thing! Then, first on one side, then on the other, they fold the corners down, to make two triangles. Then they turn the points under. . . . Then they reach for the twine with one hand. . . . They pull out just what they need—to an inch—and they have it tied up for you before you've really had time to admire their skill! . . . And there you have your bundle, with a ring to put your finger through!

THE CUSTOMER: Aha! . . . You seem to have watched clerks in the stores pretty closely!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: I? . . . Huh! . . . I've watched them whole days at a time. Why, I can spend an hour in front of a store, looking through the show window! Helps me to for-

get myself. . . . Why—I feel as though . . . oh—I'd like to be that piece of silk in there—that strip of braid—that red or that blue ribbon, which the girls in the dry goods stores, after they've measured it with their tape-measure . . . did you ever notice what they do? . . . They make an "8" of it around the thumb and finger of their left hand before they wrap it up. . . . (*A pause.*) And I watch the man or the woman, when they come out of the shop with the bundle either hanging to one of their fingers, or held under one of their arms. And I watch them till they are out of sight . . . imagining—uh-h! . . . all that I imagine! . . . You couldn't guess half of it! (*A pause.—Then gloomily, reflectively, as though speaking to himself.*) But it does me good—some good at least.

THE CUSTOMER: Good? That's interesting. What good does it do you?

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Oh—it helps to attach me—in my imagination, I mean—attach me to life—much as a vine clings to the bars of an iron gate. (*A pause.*) Oh . . . I never let it rest a moment—my imagination! I cling with it, persistently, to life—to the lives of other people! Not of people I know. No—no. I couldn't—with people I know. That disgusts me, somehow. Sort of sick to your stomach, eh?—No, I cling to the life of other people—of strangers, with whom my imagination can wander freely—But not capriciously, you understand—oh, no! . . . On the contrary—taking careful account of the least things I notice in them! And you have no idea how it works! I get right in on the inside track with some of them. . . . I can see this man's house, for instance. I live in it. I come to feel quite at home there—down to the point of noticing—say, you know, every house has a certain faint odour peculiar to it? There's one in your house—there's one in mine. But in our houses, of course, we don't notice it—because it's the very breath of our lives—understand! Oh—I can see that you agree!

THE CUSTOMER: Yes. Because—well—you must have a good time—just imagining all those things!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER (*wearily, after some reflection*): A good time? I?

THE CUSTOMER: Yes. . . . I suppose—

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: A good time! . . . I should say!
. . . Tell me—have you ever been to see a good doctor?

THE CUSTOMER: I? . . . No. Why? . . . I've never been sick.

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: No—no. . . . I meant, have you ever noticed, in a doctor's office, the waiting-room where the patients sit until their turn comes?

THE CUSTOMER: Ah, yes. . . . I once took my daughter to see a doctor. . . . Something wrong with her nerves—

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Well—I wasn't prying, you know. I meant that those waiting-rooms. . . . (*A pause.*) Did you ever notice?—a black horse-hair sofa in some old-fashioned style . . . upholstered chairs, that hardly ever match . . . an arm-chair or two—huh—second-hand stuff—picked up where they can find it. Put there for the patients. . . . Nothing to do with the house, you see. . . . The doctor—huh! . . . for himself, his wife, and his wife's friends, he has a fine parlour, comfortable, done up in style. . . . And what a noise one of those chairs in the parlour would make if you stuck it in there in the waiting-room! . . . Why—you need things about as they are—good, decent stuff, of course—not too showy—stuff that will wear. Because it'll be used by all sorts of people who come to see the doctor. I wonder. . . . When you went to the doctor's with your daughter that time—did you notice the chairs you sat on while you were waiting?

THE CUSTOMER: To tell the truth, I . . . I didn't!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Oh, of course you didn't—because you weren't sick. . . . (*A pause.*) But even sick people don't always notice—all taken up as they are with what's wrong with them. (*A pause.*) And yet, oftentimes some of them sit there, looking so carefully at one of their fingers, which is going round and round, making letters and numbers that have no meaning, on the varnished arm of the chair where they are sitting. They're thinking. They don't really see. (*A pause.*) But what a strange impression it makes on you, when, as you go through the waiting-room again, after you are through with the doctor, you catch a glimpse of that chair where you were sitting just a few moments before—anxious to have some opinion on your

mysterious disease. There it is—empty, indifferent, waiting for somebody—anybody at all—to come and sit down in it. (*A pause.*) What were we saying?—Oh, yes. I remember. The pleasures we take in imagination—how do you suppose I came to think of a chair in one of those waiting-rooms in a doctor's office, where the patients sit waiting for their turn?

THE CUSTOMER: Yes—in fact—

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: You don't understand?—Neither do I. (*A pause.*) But the fact is that certain mental associations—oh! between things worlds apart—are so peculiar to each of us, and they are determined by considerations, experiences, habits of mind, so individual that people would never understand one another unless they avoided them when they talked. Nothing more illogical, sometimes, than these associations. (*A pause.*) But the relation, perhaps, may be this—funny, eh? Do you suppose those chairs get any pleasure out of imagining who the patient is to be who will next sit down in them, waiting for his turn to see the doctor?—what disease he will have?—where he will go?—what he will do after he has been examined? . . . No pleasure at all! And so it is with me. . . . No pleasure at all! So many patients come, and they are there, poor chairs, to be sat on! . . . Well—my job in life is something like theirs. Now this thing, and now that, occupies me. This moment it happens to be you, and . . . pleasure?—Believe me, I find no pleasure at all in thinking of the train you lost—of the family you have in the country—all the annoyances I can imagine you have.

THE CUSTOMER: There are a lot of them, I can tell you!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Well, you ought to thank God that you've nothing worse than annoyances!—(*A pause.*) Some of us, you know, are worse off than that! (*A pause.*) I'm telling you that I need to attach myself in my imagination to the lives other people lead. But—in my peculiar way—without pleasure—without any real interest, even—in such a way, in fact—yes, just so—in such a way, precisely, as to sense the annoyances they encounter. . . . In such a way as to be able to understand how stupid and silly life is, so that no one, really, ought to care a snap about being rid of the thing! (*With sul- len rage.*) And that's a good deal to prove, you know. It takes

arguing and proof—continual examples, which we have to keep impressing upon ourselves—mercilessly—because, my dear sir—we don't know what it is, exactly—but it's there, just the same—it's there—and we all feel it, every one of us, catching us—here—by our throats—a sort of anguish—a thirst for living that is never satisfied, that is never quenched—that can never be quenched. Because life, as we live it from moment to moment, is always such a hurrying—such a stuffy thing—that it never lets us get the full taste of it. The flavour of life is in the past, which remains always as something living within us. Our enjoyment of it comes from back there—from the memories which hold us bound—but bound to what? Bound to these stupidities, precisely—to these annoyances—to all these silly illusions, all these insipid occupations of ours. Yes—yes—this little bit of foolishness here—this little annoyance . . . little?—why little? Even this great misfortune—a real misfortune—yes, sir—four, five, ten years hence will have, who knows, what flavour for us? Who knows what keen enjoyment, mingled with its tears! And life—God! Life—the moment we think of losing it—especially when it is only a matter of days—(*At this point, a woman, dressed in black, appears around the corner on the right.*) . . . Say—do you see that—I mean, over there—at the corner? You see that woman? Ah! She's gone again.

THE CUSTOMER: A woman?—Where? . . . Who was it?

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: You didn't see her? . . . She has gone now.

THE CUSTOMER: A woman? . . .

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: My wife. . . . Yes. . . .

THE CUSTOMER: Ah! . . . Your wife!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER (*after a pause*): She keeps her eye on me. . . . Sometimes, you know, I feel almost like getting up and giving her a kick! But what good would that do—after all? . . . She's like one of those stray dogs you take into the house. . . . Obstinate! . . . The more you kick them and beat them, the closer they stick to your heels. (*A pause.*) What that woman is going through on my account, you can't imagine, sir! . . . Goes without her meals—rarely ever goes to bed—just follows me around, day and night—that way

—at a distance! . . . I wish she would be a little more attentive to her appearance! She might brush her clothes once in a while, at least . . . and that old hat she wears! She looks more like a rag doll than like a woman! . . . Ah!—and the dust!—the white dust has settled on her hair, too, here, around her forehead . . . and barely thirty-four at that! . . . (*A pause.*) I get so mad at her sometimes—you've no idea! . . . And I lose my temper—and I go up to her, and I almost scream in her face—"Idiot!—Idiot!" . . . and I give her a shaking! . . . Nothing!—She swallows it all, and just stands there looking at me, with eyes . . . with eyes . . . Well—I could choke the life out of her, then! . . . But no—she waits till I am some distance off—and then she takes up the trail again! . . . (*At this point the woman's head again appears around the corner.*) Look!—Look! . . . There she is again! . . . See her?—Did you see her?

THE CUSTOMER: Poor thing!

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Poor thing! . . . Huh! . . .

Do you know what that woman wants of me? She wants me to stay quiet—peaceful-like—at home where she can cuddle me and humour me with her tenderest and most affectionate attentions! . . . every room in perfect order . . . every piece of furniture in its place—and the varnish clean and polished. . . . Silence . . . deadly silence . . . broken only by the tick-tock, tick-tock of the grandfather's clock in our dining-room. . . . Huh! . . . That's her notion of life! . . . Well—I'll leave it to you. Isn't that about the limit of absurdity! . . . Absurdity?—Ferocity, I would say rather. . . . A kind of ghoulish cruelty! Do you suppose, sir, that the houses of Avezzano, or the houses of Messina, knowing that the earthquake was going to topple them over within a very few days, could have been persuaded to sit still there, under the moonlight—all in nice straight lines, radiating from the squares—eh?—the way the Town Planning Committee decided they ought to be? . . . No, sir!—Brick and stone though they were, they would have found legs, somehow, to run away! And the people who lived in them—do you think that if they had known what was going to happen to them, they would have

gone to their bedrooms every night as usual—folded their clothes up nicely, set their shoes outside their doors, and then crawled comfortably into bed between their nice white sheets—knowing for certain that in a few hours they would be dead? . . . Do you think they would?

THE CUSTOMER: But, perhaps your Signora. . . .

MAN WITH THE FLOWER: Just a moment. . . . If death, my dear sir, were like one of those strange, loathsome insects you sometimes find walking up your coat sleeve. . . . Here you are, going along the side-walk. . . . A man comes up to you, all of a sudden—stops you, and then, cautiously, holding out two fingers of his hand, says to you—"Beg pardon—may I?" . . . And with those two fingers he skips the insect off! . . . Ah! . . . That would be fine! . . . But death isn't like one of those loathsome insects. Many people walk by you, but no one notices anything. They are all absorbed in what they are going to do to-morrow or the next day. . . . Now, I, my dear sir—look! (*He gets up.*) Just step this way—(*He draws the man aside till they are standing in the full light of the street-lamp.*) Look! . . . I want to show you something. . . . See this spot, under my moustache?—Pretty violet colour, isn't it! . . . Do you know what they call that?—A pretty name!—like a verse from a poem—E-pi-the-li-o-ma! . . . Epithelioma! . . . Say it yourself, and you'll notice how nice it sounds!—Epithelioma! . . . But death—you understand—death! . . . Death has passed my way, and put this flower in my mouth—"A souvenir, my dear sir! Keep it—no charge! . . . I'll be back this way a few months hence!" (*A pause.*) Now, you tell me, sir—whether, with a flower like this in my mouth, I can sit quietly at home, there, as that poor woman would like to have me do! . . . (*A pause.*) I scream at her—"Yes—Yes! . . . Don't you want me to kiss you?" . . . "Yes—kiss me!" she says. . . . And you know what she did, the other day? She took a pin and scratched her lip, and then seized me by the head and tried to kiss me—kiss me—here—on my lips—because she wants to die with me, she says! . . . (*A pause.*) Crazy woman! (*Then, angrily.*) But I refuse to stay at home! I've simply got to stand around, looking into the shop windows,

admiring the deftness of the clerks at the counters! . . . Because, you understand, if I should permit myself one single idle moment—why, I might go mad! . . . I might pull out a revolver and shoot someone who never did me the least harm in the world! . . . Why, I might shoot you, for instance—though all you've done, so far as I can see, is to have lost your train! . . . (*He laughs.*) Oh, no!—no! . . . Don't be afraid. . . . I'm only joking! . . . (*A pause.*) Well—I must be going. . . . (*A pause.*) At the very worst, I might kill myself some day—(*A pause.*) But, you see, this is the fruit season, and I like apricots. . . . How do you eat them?—Skin and all, I suppose. Ah!—that's the way! . . . You cut them in halves, and you bring your two fingers together, and you suck in the juice, eh?—Ah! that's the way! . . . How good they are! . . . (*He laughs. A pause.*) Well—give my regards to your wife and daughters, when you get back to the country. (*A pause.*) I imagine them dressed in white and blue, sitting on the green grass in the shade of some tree. . . . (*A pause.*) Do something for me to-morrow morning, when you get home—will you? . . . I suppose your villa will be some little distance from the station. Well—you'll get there about sunrise, won't you? And you'd enjoy making the trip on foot. Well—the first tuft of grass you notice on the roadside—just count the blades for me! The number of those blades of grass will be the number of the days I still have to live! . . . (*A pause.*) . . . Choose a good-sized clump, if you please—eh? . . . (*He laughs.*) Well—good-night! . . . good-night! . . . (*He walks away, humming through his closed lips the movement played by the distant mandolin. He heads at first toward the corner on the right, but then, reflecting that his wife is probably there waiting for him, he turns around and walks off in the other direction. The Customer sits there, looking after him in amazement.*)

CURTAIN

EXILE

BY RICHARD ALDINGTON

"Do you dwell on the snowy promontory of Mimas?"

How shall we utter
This horror, this rage, this despair?
How shall we strike at baseness,
Cut through disgust with scorn?
How rend with slashed fingers
The bars and walls of their lives
Which blacken our air and pure light?

What are they? Alien, brutish,
Base seed of Earth's ravished womb;
Shall we yield our light and our truth—
The flash of the helm
And the foam-grey eyes and the hair
Braided with gold,
Steel mail on a firm breast?
Shall we yield?

Their life, their truth?
O laugh of disdain!
If ours be a goddess,
Chaste, proud, and austere;
What is theirs?
A boastful woman, a whore,
Whose vice is most stupid, most foul;
One greasy of flesh, stale
With hot musty perfume—
While ours—
Firm-fleshed as the treeless hills
With her rigid breasts and hard thighs,
Cold and perfect and fresh—
Fields crisp with new frost—

Sets the violet-crown in her hair,
Turns an unstained brow to the sky.

Let us stand by the earth-shaking sea
Unfurrowed by a hull,
Let us move among beeches and oaks
Unprofaned by loud speech;
Let us reverence the sacred earth
And the roar of unbridled falls
And the crash of an untamed sea,
Let us shade our eyes from the sun
And gaze through the fluttering leaves
Far, most far;
Shall we see her hill
And the marble front of her house
And herself, standing calm,
Many-coloured, triumphant, austere?



A NUDE. BY WILLIAM SOMMER

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WALTER SCOTT

BY BENEDETTO CROCE

NO one, writing early in the past century of the then contemporary history of European letters, would have hesitated to classify Walter Scott among the stars of first magnitude in the firmament of art and poetry. In the applause then accorded Scott's name there were few dissenting voices indeed. His works were travelling from land to land, everywhere inspiring followers and imitators—rarely, in fact, has a writer ever had pupils at once so numerous and so distinguished. It is not a question either of a “popular” vogue resting on the enthusiasm of unthinking multitudes; no less a person than Goethe spoke of Walter Scott as “a peerless genius, who fully deserves the marvellous success he is having with readers the world over.” In the England of the time, it was a commonplace to compare Walter Scott with Shakespeare, the only predecessor of the great Scotchman thought worthy of mention in such connexion for fertility of inventiveness (so people said) for infinite variety of character, scene, situation, episode, for universality of human sympathy, for purity of moral tone.

Later on all this glory passed—even here in Italy; where, as compared with the dozens of translations of Scott's “complete works” issued in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, we find, after 1850, only occasional reprintings of separate volumes in series of “world classics”; while allusions to his books and his people, once so frequent in the speeches of Italian orators and in the writings of Italian authors, became more and more scanty and finally ceased. Our critics, especially after the famous strictures of Taine, showed themselves harsh, not to say cruel and contemptuous toward him—an attitude that has again been taken in Emilio Cecchi's recent History of English Literature. It is, in very truth, a tax on one's self-control to speak kindly of Scott after a conscientious reading of all his works: he wrote too many books, and the labour he imposes upon the reader of to-day—a reader quite *blasé* to the graces of the old art and familiar with all its tricks that once seemed so clever—fills us with a spite which betrays itself the mo-

ment we begin to talk of him. Had he stopped at *Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, and one or two others at the most, the modern critic might be inclined to some indulgence. We would have patience left to weigh Scott's objective values, and in some serenity of spirit piously and gratefully acknowledge the few flashes of real art which, in spite of everything, do shine in the mass of his whole production.

This serenity we must attain if we would apply to Walter Scott even the methods of historical criticism. Approaching him from this point of view (and, as I must warn again, in a spirit of justice and serenity) we perceive that first of all we must take account of the social function he so admirably fulfilled.

Walter Scott, to speak quite plainly, was a literary manufacturer. His task it was to supply a market with wares which were in a demand as great as it was legitimate. Are not the needs of the human imagination—needs of stimulation or of amusement—real needs? And is it not a healthy manifestation of such needs to demand spectacles of virtue, of courage, of prowess, of generosity—spectacles, moreover, which will not merely satisfy idle curiosity, but prove profitable as well by imparting information about historical events, customs, epochs? Walter Scott had a genius for supplying such a market. He began by writing poems which were a first answer to the demand. After a few years he discovered that this particular brand of goods was growing stale, whether because his own raw materials were depreciating, or because a strong competition was growing up in the novelties offered by the young Lord Byron. So he turned to prose, issuing a new trade-mark that had the lure of mystery—"by the author of the *Waverley* novels"—and he made a great success, a success that attended him to the end. Read the "*Lives*" written about Walter Scott and you will see that they deal with a captain of industry and not, save incidentally, with a literary man. His biographers expatiate admiringly on the sagacity of his speculations; on the application and endurance which enabled him to produce two or three novels a year; on the estate which he created from his enormous royalties—building a castle where he entertained with princely hospitality. Of his inner life, meantime, not a word. Nothing of his experiences with love, with religion, with philosophical problems. Less than nothing about the travail of spirit which we think of as the artist's characteristic domain. In Scott's biography the dramatic moment is al-

ways the failure of his publisher-partner, which left the novelist penniless and thousands of pounds in debt; and lo, he rises indomitable above misfortune, courageously taking pen in hand. He promises to pay that debt, to satisfy all his creditors to the last shilling. And the promise he keeps; because when in the end he collapses under the heroic effort, he has redeemed most of his obligations, leaving the rest to be provided for after his death by the gratitude of a nation. This gratitude, notice, was addressed probably less to the great writer than to the great business man who had furnished an immortal example of British probity and rectitude. The life of Walter Scott belongs not to the history of literature, but to that of "Self-help." It goes well with the books of Smiles and the like.

In the second place, Scott's work again fails to enter the province of art since its character was determined by the specific manner in which the demand of the British—of the European—consumer was presented and by the nature of the goods he aimed to supply. It was a question of the new historical-moral-political consciousness that had sprung up in reaction to the rationalism of the Eighteenth Century and to the Jacobinism of the French Revolution, a reaction that implied a new reverence toward history, stress on tradition and custom, emphasis on nationality (as opposed to superficial and unilateral cosmopolitanism). Of all this Scott was surely not the author. He had numberless predecessors in Germany, France, Great Britain, and even in Italy. But just as surely he was the great popularizer of these tendencies, and by all odds the shrewdest of those who exploited them commercially.

We must not underestimate the importance of Scott's influence in this connexion. He was a great educator. People whom the singing of the poets, the thinking of the philosophers, the learning of the historians, failed to touch, found easy access to the facile romance of Walter Scott. The Scotland of his imagination engendered a whole series of other Scotlands; the nations of Europe, I mean, going back into their own pasts, reviving their ancient customs and traditions. Even professional historians were not immune to his influence, and this influence was a good one in the sense that it forced history away from the monotonous and colourless methods of the Humanists and the "Illuminati"—its defects appearing largely in the temptation it fostered to confuse history with

the historical novel, glitteringly coloured, but superficial and insignificant. Criticism, however, was eventually able to correct such exaggerations, and the benefits alone were left. No one can write a sound history of historical writing in the Nineteenth Century without giving generous credit to Walter Scott.

In the third connexion we must keep the problem of Scott distinct from the problem of art, in so far, that is, as we are interested in Scott's technical skill as a novelist. This deftness we must not measure with the ingenuity of our own day—a comparison from which it suffers badly (because Scott's methods are now quite familiar and outworn, so that a cry of "old stuff" would greet any one trying to revive them); but rather with the devices in vogue before him and with the expectations of the public to which he sold. Goethe, for example, notoriously awkward and unimaginative in plot-construction, had profound admiration for Scott as a storyteller. The "new art" he found in the great Scotchman, a "new art governed by its own inner laws," gave him "much food for thought." Scott studied his subject matter carefully as an antiquarian and a tourist. He described landscapes, based his action on manners and customs, maintained "suspense" by the use of mysterious characters endowed with extraordinary powers, created the "illusion of reality" in tales of Norman, Saxon, Puritan, and Jacobite, by making people of other times talk and act as they really talked and acted. The epic he lightened with comedy, benevolently smiling at personages limited to one idea, one desire, one motive. And unfailingly he kept his main people in the foreground, people noble and valorous, certain to hold the sympathy and interest of the reader.

In the fourth place the artistic criterion fails for Scott for the simple reason that art—or poetry, if you wish—was a secondary matter with him. The critic who looks for the artist in Scott inevitably ends with what we Italians call the "*stroncatura*"—the slashing, the flaying, which, however apposite it may be in the literary campaigns of our own day, becomes sheer bad manners, sheer ill-temper, when used on men of the past. Certainly when a writer like Gosse steps forward and denies anybody's right to find defects in Scott, asserting that "England can challenge the world to produce in its literature a purer spirit, a more brilliant mind, a creator of more heroic works, a more marvellous painter of historical pictures," the impulse to indulge in a bit of mirth becomes almost ir-

resistible. But is there much really to quarrel about? Gosse himself is not quite so sure of his ground. He says that if Europe will have nothing of Walter Scott, his own England may keep him for herself, exulting in her possession of him as the author of the most perfect style in the national literature, as a writer who never wrote a word that was morbid, impertinent, mean, or low, as the most perfect exemplification of the English gentleman.

Gentleman, yes, but poet?

Scott's poetic vein, never gushing with a very copious flow, soon was clogged by his essentially prosaic temperament. Even when he was writing in verse, there was little of the poet's inspiration in him, as may be verified by recalling any one of the most famous passages of his poems. Here is what he says of the Last Minstrel:

"The way was long, the wind was cold,
The minstrel was infirm and old:
His withered cheek and tresses gray
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy. . . ."

Or savour this decription of Melrose Abbey:

"If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moon-light;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.
Where the broken arches are blank in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain power
Streams on the ruined central tower . . .
Then go—but go alone the while,—
Then view St. David's ruined pile;
And home returning, smoothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair! . . ."

Quite as superficial is the art of his prose novels, replete with characters and cases known in the jargon of Latin critics as "interesting." Think of all the adventures, mysteries, duels, battles, intrigues, hairbreadth escapes, bandits, beautiful women, jolly friars,

Black Knights, and what not, that constitute the thrill of *Ivanhoe*. But in the end we go away with empty hearts. There is neither an epic feeling, nor a religious feeling, nor even a lyric sentiment of love in this famous novel. The characters stand before us as spectacles for our eyes, or at least for our imaginations. There is no real idea behind all that happens except the idea of supplying a series of attractive scenes. Strike, if you choose, a chord of deeper resonance—the celebrated love passage between the Templar and the Jewess Rebecca. But that episode, too, is little, at bottom, but a riot in the “picturesque.” The character of the enamoured knight and the exchanges between the Templar and the Jewish girl are treated in a conventional and often absurd manner: we have the set for a drama of the soul, but the soul fails to materialize. The best touches, certainly, are a few impulses of generosity in the Templar’s heart, and especially his death in combat—not under the enemy’s joust, but from the violent tension of his conflicting passions. There is some merit—flashes of delicate and noble brilliancy—in the portrait of Rebecca, notably in the last visit she pays to the Lady Rowena and in their farewell. It is the figure of a Jewess who remains such out of loyalty to race, but with a successful outreaching to pure humanity.

Similar moments are not lacking in other novels of Scott, *Old Mortality*, for instance, in the conception of the crude and licentious Sergeant Bothwell, made ridiculous by his constant harping on his descent from the Stuarts, and on whose breast, when he had fallen in battle, Morton finds a wallet containing the Stuart family tree, two love letters written in a woman’s hand twenty years before, a wisp of hair, and poems indited by this same Bothwell. Morton is moved to reflection on the destiny of this singular and unhappy wretch, who, from the depth of failure and poverty, could still cherish his dream of the grandeur to which birth entitled him, and who, from his debauchery and licence, looked back with yearning toward the one pure passion of his youth. *Rob Roy* has a few hints at poetry—themes of travel and unexpected meetings—in its earlier chapters; so does *Waverley* in an occasional evocation of traditional semi-barbarous life. But they are soon lost in insignificant intrigue again. This is one’s inevitable experience with Scott. His novels start promisingly—I am thinking of *Saint Roman’s Wells* particularly—but before long we are caught in the “ro-

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manesque," the *pastiche*, the imbroglio, and interest ends—not altogether, to be sure, for we are certain to encounter here and there figures like that of the Curate of Saint Roman (since I have mentioned this novel) drawn with a moving and delicate kindliness that has a very real charm.

This kindly smile of Walter Scott is perhaps the most truly poetic thing about him. It illuminates even his comic characters who tend toward the "fixed type," but are sometimes kept within proper bounds. By virtue of it, *The Heart of Midlothian* surpasses, so it seems to me, all the other novels. This story, known on the Continent as *The Prison of Edinboro*, is penetrated through and through with kindliness, not in details only, but in the very composition of the plot. Even here there is intrigue galore, with the usual brigands (brigands, who are not brigands so much as gentlemen of supernal delicacy) and other make-ups from the travelling bag of the melodramatist. But how escape the spell of the gentle Effie, falsely accused of infanticide, or of her sister Jennie, who will not lie to save her, but who does save her in the end by persistence in the face of every danger? The sentimental "Laird," Dumb Dikes, the malicious and generous, the shrewd and jealous Madge, are handled in the most realistic, and yet pitiful, truth. Scott spares David Deans none of the latter's pedantry and self-conceit; but the man's sterling nobility in the midst of bitter trial, his tenderness, his humility for all of his religious austerity, do not fail to move us. Even the good-natured Saddletree is presented in a singularly subtle blend of unselfishness and pride. I note as a matter of curiosity that the scene at supper in the fisherman's hut where David Deans, about to say grace, pushes Effie's empty chair away from the table as though to remove every earthly association from the reading of the Scriptures, had a great fortune in Italy in the plagiarism made of it by Grossi in his *Marco Visconti*.

This stream of very human goodness, this undercurrent of smiling sympathy and charitableness, finds its way through the bulk of Scott's work, here and there breaking to the surface in what may be called real art, a modest, unpretentious art, to be sure, where all the rest is erudition, skill, business; but with poetry enough to let us depart in good humour from an author who delighted our fathers and grandfathers, and who, for this reason if for no other, deserves courteous treatment from their children and grandchildren.

TWO POEMS

BY ANTHONY WRYNN

PROUD

Call it a palfrey, this small horse;
The sweet pasture, that grass eaten to the roots;
Call those wind-punished fruit trees the shade;
The mud a brook; call them that and kill them.

You chanter bat-eyed with print, rotten
With euphemism, you can call the manure
In the rock-gnarled orchard what you want,
But someone is coming to see you some day

And when you stand there, your hand
On the cold knob of the open door, the pen
That murdered so many young bony horses, so many
Desperate orchards, behind your ear,

You won't call the black suit a robe
And cowl, you won't tell the gentleman
That his eyes are caves of forgetfulness. Slowly
It will all come back to you

And you will say no
The way everything else says no
When he steps back
And motions down the stairs.

HE WOVE HIS NEST IN THE PORTICO

Jet threaded with tincture of the violet,
This is the quill of the crow.
Softly across the net-work of bone
The thin feathers spread
Into the tail, catching the light
Of the bright air. Jet slender, gnarled
Like winter twigs, these are his legs
And feet, and his eyes
Are quick jet full of storms.

The crow goes home to a white tree
Or a green. He eats from snow
Or summer rocks. He speaks in the morning
From the quiet copse
With wild stark voice. At night
He is a token of the day.

Such a bird, though he steal your paltry seed,
Will counsel you when delight
Covers your eyes and holds your wrists
At your side, or his wing
Will flutter the pool of your heart
When its waters
Are deadened by the wind-break of wisdom.

PRINCESS CHALCONDYLAS

BY LOUIS COUPERUS

Translated from the Dutch by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos

ANY mention of Princess Chalcondylas and her son Basile in Rome always provoked a smile: a cruel smile, perhaps; certainly a smile which casts a cruel light upon both their portraits.

Princess Chalcondylas bore an ancient Graeco-Byzantine name, but she was no *princesse lointaine* and she was once plain Marie Delestre. She came from nowhere more remote than Paris and her maiden name was that of a respectable family of teachers, a family which, though middle-class, yet seemed to contain a heritage of intellect, for it had enriched mankind for years, if not for centuries, with tutors and governesses, even as another family will breed clergymen, a third give the preference to men of business, a fourth supply the military element, and a fifth play-actors, civil servants, hairdressers, sailors, or what not. Marie Delestre proved herself a chip of the old block: as a girl of barely nineteen, she took the courageous resolve to seek a situation as a governess, in order to contribute to the support of her elderly parents. Governesses are always better paid abroad than at home; so Marie Delestre, with a couple of certificates in her pocket, looked out for a situation in Germany, Russia, or America. As luck would have it, the agency to which she applied found her a position as governess in a half-Greek, half-Roumanian family, who lived at Bucharest and wanted a French teacher for their children, two boys of fifteen and fourteen and a girl of twelve. The family enjoyed the princely title of Chalcondylas and owned extensive estates in Roumania in addition to their palace at Bucharest.

II

Marie Delestre set out for Bucharest. She was a plucky girl with good qualities all her own. She was not pretty, but capable and confident, young and healthy, a fresh blossom of the Delestre fam-

ily, thanks to the less intellectual blood of her mother, who came of a family of provincial countryfolk. Zola has accustomed us so thoroughly to examining the hereditary problems of the persons whom we evoke in literature that we novelists, writers of short stories, and painters of cruel portraits can never lose sight of them. And so Marie Delestre did not look in the least like the decadent offshoot of a family of teachers who had overdone her studies. She was a short, bright, lively, sonsy little woman, with a wealth of dark, curly hair; and, as her certificates showed, she had sufficient intelligence to teach young people French and the first principles of music. She herself played the piano very well. She was absolutely likable, in spite of a touch of professional pedantry which she had inherited on her father's side. She was a pleasant, capable girl of nineteen, who intended to make her way in the world and cherished a dutiful and affectionate feeling for her old people. No one, painting her portrait as a young girl, could have introduced any cruel emphasis, however much he might have wished to do so.

III

Marie Delestre arrived at Bucharest. She was tired after her long journey, just a little nervous, and, now that she had come so far, frightened of this foreign princely family. She would be fetched at the station, they had written to tell her; and her eyes were looking out for a footman, for the face of a clean-shaven footman, when a charming young man came up to her, hat in hand, and asked:

"Are you Mlle Delestre?"

Marie said yes. And the young fellow introduced himself as Prince Basile Chalcondylas, who had come to meet the new governess at the station. Marie was surprised and did not understand; and Prince Basile had to explain that, besides the two sons and the daughter whom she was to teach, there was also an eldest son, who of course had not been mentioned in the letters. He, Basile, was this eldest son. He led her to his little car, which he drove himself, and took her home, where Marie was received by the parents, the prince and princess, and made the acquaintance of her three pupils, two big, unruly boys and a naughty girl who put out her tongue at her.

IV

Marie had a difficult time at the Chalcondylas palace. She had the greatest trouble in maintaining her authority, she, a girl of barely nineteen. The two young princes of fourteen and fifteen looked seventeen and eighteen and were youthful sprigs of full-blooded virility, on the point of budding and bursting into full bloom. Not every princely race is bloodless and, if I adopted Zola's theories of heredity, I could explain to you why these young princes were so warm-blooded, but I dare say that you will agree that it was because of some warm-blooded grandfather or grandmother. And they were decidedly troublesome to their young governess, with their impudent efforts to romp and take liberties with her. While Marie was defending herself, the naughty little princess would peep inquisitively through a chink of the door. The Chalcondylas palace, however princely, was not exactly a model residence nor noted for its austere manners and strict code of morals: when the princess went to Vienna, now and again, to replenish her wardrobe, the prince would also disappear for a few days, in mysterious company, to his hunting-box; and the three children and the host of servants, like so many savages and cannibals let loose, remained masters of the house. Everyone slept as long as he pleased and had his meals when he felt inclined; there was dancing below stairs; and Marie Delestre, generally so plucky and self-possessed, was as much scared as though her last hour had struck, especially when the two young princes came rattling at the handle of her locked door, while the little princess did Heaven knows what Heaven knows where. . . .

Of this house of noble and semi-oriental modern barbarians, Prince Basile was, to the perplexed Marie Delestre, the most understandable element. She understood neither the trips to Vienna nor the idylls at the hunting-box; and she would never have had any suspicion of a child-life such as that led by her pupils. But Prince Basile at any rate was understandable: he was a fashionable youth, with plenty of money, who used to come home late at night from mingling in society, respectable or other. He was polite and charming; and lately he seemed to surmise that he was not employing the French subjunctive quite correctly. He felt this defect in his education so strongly that he asked Marie's permission to attend the

French lessons which she was giving to the three young reprobates. These lessons never taught him the correct use of the French subjunctive, but the fact that he was attending them had certain results, especially when Marie unbosomed herself to him one day. The young princes ceased trying to take liberties with their terrified governess and the little princess no longer put out her tongue at her.

It was during one of the trips to Vienna and one of the idylls at the hunting-box: the prince and princess, so irregular in other respects, displayed in this particular both regularity and co-operation. Marie Delestre, owing to Prince Basile's temporary absence, had had a most difficult day with her unmanageable pupils. They had emptied a decanter of wine into the piano and made Marie's life unbearable in every possible way. That evening Marie sat up for Prince Basile, who came home very late, just a little merry and not quite steady on his legs, but otherwise delightfully polite and charming. Marie, in tears, confessed her sorrows to Prince Basile, with the result that Prince Basile confessed his to Marie. There was a strange feeling of thunder in the air. There was a strange, early-morning feeling indoors. The servants had been drinking and dancing below stairs; and the din had ceased only when the chauffeur, who had been posted as sentry, heard Prince Basile's key in the latch. The children were in bed. . . .

You can guess the rest, reader. It was perhaps only the fault of the French subjunctive; but Marie Delestre had to leave Bucharest a few months later . . . to go to Paris and replenish her wardrobe; for her simple, tasteful little frocks, cut to her brisk, neat, lively little governess figure, no longer fitted her at all.

V

We must not take things more tragically than the occasion warrants, lest we become more tragic than tragedy. A moment can be tragic, life never. Life is humorous rather than tragic, as witness the story of Marie Delestre, who is now in Paris, feeling a little sad about her tragic moment and replenishing her wardrobe. Humour has its eye on her—dear, kind humour, which does not admit the least shade of cruelty. In Paris she meets Jean Dámour, an elderly man, a worthy younger colleague of her father's. Jean Damour is a credit to his name: he was already in love with Marie when she

set out for Bucharest. During her absence abroad he has come into a legacy: he is well off. Marie tells him her tragedy and the good fellow marries her and . . . and even adopts her son, who is born three months later, as his own.

You can't paint cruel portraits of such good people as that. And so I shall not go on painting Jean Damour. Besides, he dies after ten years of a happy and peaceful life with his wife and his adopted son Jean.

VI

Marie Damour, *née* Delestre, now a young widow in Paris possessed of a comfortable fortune, reads in the papers that Prince Basile Chalcondylas has arrived. He is her seducer of ten years ago! How could her thoughts do other than fly to him? Mixed thoughts, it is true, thoughts which exert a certain influence, especially when Marie learns incidentally that Basile, who is now just turned thirty, two years older than herself, is a ruined man, without even being able to boast that he is the author of his own ruin: the trips to Vienna, the idylls at the hunting-box had already brought the ruin about; and on the death of his princely parents Basile was left without a penny. He is now looking out for a rich wife. . . .

Marie calls on the prince at his hotel. He does not refuse to see her and the interview is even pleasurable. Basile admits that he is looking for a rich wife, the daughter of some American millionaire. But will he find her? He confesses his doubts to Marie. His health has gone snap; for that matter, you can see as much by looking at him. Though he is young in years, it is not only his purse that has suffered. In a word, for all his princely title, he is no great catch as a husband, as he himself honestly admits. My readers know that I appreciate these little flashes of honest illumination which fall upon my cruel portraits.

But Marie, after those mixed thoughts of hers, has made up her mind about what she will propose to Basile. Look at her: she is not a transatlantic millionairess, but she has a very pretty income. She is the last woman to make herself a nuisance to Prince Basile, but, if he consented to marry her and acknowledge their son, she would be prepared to give him a handsome allowance, an allowance big enough to enable him to vegetate in a bachelor's flat in Paris or at

the hunting-box in Roumania—Prince Basile's only possession—until the health that has gone snap says "Snap!" for good and all. It would mean a quiet existence for Basile: no hunting for an American bride, with doubtful chances of success, but a safe income for the rest of his life. . . .

And Prince Basile accepts. He marries Marie Delestre, who now becomes Princess Maria Chalcondylas; he sees his son, a pretty, dark-haired Roumanian lad—the very image of Basile's younger brother—whose name is to be changed from Jean Damour to Prince Basile Chalcondylas the younger. . . .

But stop, stop! Let us not hurry on too fast. I am no expert in French and Roumanian law. See here: old Jean Damour married Marie Delestre, who gave birth, a few months after the wedding, to a son registered in Paris as Jean Damour the younger. Now there is no doubt whatever that young Jean Damour is Prince Basile's son, but . . . but has the law, the French or Roumanian law, anything to say in the matter? True, Prince Basile acknowledges Jean Damour the younger as his son and gives him the right to call himself Prince Basile the younger . . . but is everything all right in the eyes of the law and of society? Maybe it is, maybe it is not: the reader cannot expect me, a mere painter of cruel portraits, to decide. . . .

But, without learning of the decision, you will understand the smile that is always provoked in Rome by the mention of Princess Maria Chalcondylas and her son Basile, a good-looking, pleasant boy whom his mother would like to marry to a Pallavicini or Odescalchi. For I have kept my cruelest touch for the end. You must know that Princess Maria has always remained a scion of the French teacher's family. She has remained middle-class: and her short, thick-set, buxom figure, now that she is growing older, lacks any trace of aristocratic languor: remember her wholesome, provincial, countrified mother. She does not speak a word of Roumanian, which is odd in a Graeco-Roumanian princess. Also, young Prince Basile, who was never at Bucharest in his life, is a true Parisian, notwithstanding his classic, oriental features. That strikes the Odescalchis and Pallavicinis—families born with proud, age-old traditions—as very peculiar. They don't know what to make of it all.

In any case, Prince Basile the younger, with his personal charm

and old Jean Damour's little fortune, will never make a brilliant marriage. Perhaps he does not mind, but his mother does. On the simple, practical, and erstwhile filial soul of Marie Delestre vanity has set its seal. She is a princess: her son is a prince. She is undoubtedly admitted to the drawing-rooms which are not excessively strict and which have cosmopolitan at-homes on Thursdays, whereas they receive the real set quietly on Mondays. On Thursdays Princess Maria is received. Is she not a sensible woman, a good mother, a talented musician, and, moreover, is she not really Princess Chalcondylas? She has to be received on the Thursdays . . . although she is never there on the Mondays.

This makes Princess Maria very unhappy, both because of her son and because of her vanity. They are her son and daughter. Vanity is her younger daughter, almost as dear to her as her son.

When Princess Maria is alone, she thinks of the old days and sometimes forgets her vanity. And then she gives a little smile and shrugs her shoulders. For in reality she is a sensible woman with good qualities all her own. And she herself feels that life is never more tragic than tragedy; and she realizes at the same time how humorous it all is, that she, Marie Delestre, the little governess, has become Princess Chalcondylas and her son Prince Basile. . . .



FONS VITAE. BY RUDOLF VON HUHN





THE MANDARIN. BY RUDOLF VON HUHN

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GEORGE MOORE AND JOHN FREEMAN

BY GEORGE MOORE

MAID: Mr Freeman, sir.

FREEMAN: I am afraid I am interrupting.

MOORE: You are welcome to interrupt my reading. I am always willing to lay aside a book to talk.

FREEMAN: To anybody?

MOORE: I prefer a man of wit like yourself; but since I am confessing myself I will disclose all. I would lay aside the wisest book to talk to a stupid woman.

FREEMAN: Or man?

MOORE: Yes; or man, for I have lost my taste for reading, and there are few greater misfortunes. We cannot always be talking, we cannot always be at the theatre, we cannot always be listening to music or visiting exhibitions of pictures; and to lose one's taste for reading is really like losing one's taste for bread.

FREEMAN: But I find you reading.

MOORE: Reading with a purpose, which is a very different thing from reading for pleasure. I am reading one of George Eliot's novels.

FREEMAN: Reading George Eliot, and for a purpose? I shouldn't have been surprised if I had found you reading Jane Austen or the Brontës, but Daniel Deronda!

MOORE: The story I am reading is less purposeful—Silas Marner. Ah, if she had been less purposeful!

FREEMAN: Yet in spite of her purposes, which are fatiguing, you find something to admire?

MOORE: The book has only just come from the library. I am in the first pages and am surprised to find that she has a better conception of what a story should be than most English writers. I remember her first book, *Scenes from Clerical Life*, and one story has haunted me ever since.

FREEMAN: You do not intend to write something like it?

MOORE: My dear Mr Freeman!

FREEMAN: Forgive me. You intend to write an essay about her?

MOORE: An essay I must write about somebody, for I am short of copy. You remember that I withdrew Impressions and Opinions from the list of books that Liveright is publishing in America.

FREEMAN: I have heard that Mr Arthur Symons speaks of Impressions and Opinions as your best book.

MOORE: Arthur Symons speaks out of vague memories. If he were to open the book again he would see at once that it lacked unity of subject and language. How could it be else, for I was glad then to collect articles that I had written for various newspapers; and so long as I was saying something that seemed entertaining I was satisfied.

FREEMAN: Unity of subject and language is an almost grandiloquent view to take, one that George Eliot herself might have taken.

MOORE: You think it too purposeful? It may be; but if we are artists our lives are spent in a continual striving after perfection, and in this striving we very often lose something that we have already won; but that can't be helped.

FREEMAN: So the new book which will replace Impressions and Opinions will be a unity?

MOORE: You put a meaning upon my words that they have not. I said I would strive towards some sort of unity, something that would not seem at a first glance like flagrant journalism. You asked me if I am writing an essay. No; I am weary of essays, and I don't write them well; perhaps that's the reason why I am weary of them.

FREEMAN: And the name of the new book?

MOORE: Conversations in Ebury Street.

FREEMAN: Ah, I like the title. But why in Ebury Street? Why not simply Conversations? Since Landor nobody has attempted conversations, and after the long interval it has come to you to revive a form in which criticism can be conducted more agreeably than in the essay.

MOORE: My admiration for Landor is without limit; I place him above Shakespeare, and to imitate him would be honour enough for me. But it was not Landor that prompted me to go and do likewise; the form rose out of what I had to say quite naturally. I was tempted, I know not why, but I was tempted to examine

the novels that had come down to us from Defoe one after the other, to compare them to our poetry and to find them deficient in seriousness. This I could not do in an essay; the constant change of subject would have been impossible, or was impossible to me. Of course, I might never have thought of the dialogue if I had not known Landor; and perhaps Landor would not have thought of the dialogue if he had not read Plato.

FREEMAN: Who is your interlocutor in the present instance?

MOORE: You are, as the manuscript on the table tells: "Maid: Mr Freeman, sir. Freeman: I am afraid I am interrupting—"

FREEMAN: So you have begun the conversation?

MOORE: Yes; I have sketched some pages.

FREEMAN: Pray read them to me.

MOORE: The sheets on the table are only a beginning. I am at the stage of feeling my way into the subject, and the conversation may have already taken a wrong turn.

FREEMAN: So we discuss George Eliot together?

MOORE: George Eliot and Thomas Hardy are contrasted, or will be, in the dialogue that I am meditating.

FREEMAN: They are contrasted in the Confessions, and very violently.

MOORE: Has it come to be held as a crime to do else than to voice public opinion? To strike up with the little boy going down the street whistling gleefully in defiance of time and tune?

FREEMAN: Public opinion changes slowly, but it changes. Lord Byron and George Eliot are examples of how public opinion sees black where it once saw white, and to find an example in our own time we have only to remember Tennyson. No doubt public opinion will change regarding Thomas Hardy, but I doubt the wisdom of treating the public like a whistling boy—

MOORE: Ordering his breeches to be taken down and you to hoist him? Of course, if you don't like the subject I shall abandon it at once; but will you tell me why?

FREEMAN: It seems to me that I have already given a reason. But if you want another, here it is. You have just told me that you are willing always to lay aside a book to talk, a thing which you are doing now, forgetful that George Eliot is a voluminous writer, and of the length of *Middlemarch*, which I think you will find difficult to finish before the winter. And then there is *Romola*, another long book.

MOORE: A book that I read at a time when I considered seriously the claims of Lord Leighton to be a great painter.

FREEMAN: He supplied the illustrations.

MOORE: And a better choice of an illustrator could not have been made. Both were workers in wax. Daniel Deronda I have never opened, and I shudder at the name of Felix Holt, a very leaden book that I stopped in the middle of long, long ago. You are quite right; I shall not be able to read all George Eliot. But that is not a reason why I should abandon my subject. I have read George Eliot, and if I send the book on the table back to the library at once, I shall be able to speak to you out of my memories of her, which will be more agreeable than to read Felix Holt and ask you to dinner to argue about a defunct literature in which neither of us is in the least interested. So true is this that I am beginning already to regret having opened the book on the table; that first paragraph has biased my mind. You were going to ask me?

FREEMAN: It was certainly in my mind to ask you if your memories of George Eliot are sufficient for the dialogue you propose to write.

MOORE: You have come from her writings later than I have. Be my examiner.

FREEMAN: Tell me about Silas Marner.

MOORE: Silas Marner is about an old man, a miser, who discovers a foundling at his door, boy or girl, I have forgotten which. He must have heard the child cry and risen from his bed, for he found the child by the light of a lantern. I am sure of that; I remember the lantern. Or am I inventing?

FREEMAN: I see that you still keep some faint memory of the story.

MOORE: I can speak more precisely of some of the others.

FREEMAN: Of Middlemarch?

MOORE: Of Middlemarch I remember the delight with which I read each volume, and there were six or eight in the edition that I came upon in my grandfather's library when I was twelve or thirteen, mayhap fourteen. You may have caught sight of the portrait of an old gentleman on the wall of the lobby as you came up stairs—my grandfather, the historian who in his preface to his history of the French Revolution (I give the preface in *Ave*) speaks with delightful resignation and humility of his failure to obtain recognition. Compelled by a presentiment

that the house was going to be burnt, I wrote to Tom Ruttledge to have the portrait packed up and sent to me, and the very night it arrived a band of incendiaries came to my steward's house and demanded the keys.

FREEMAN: The manuscript of the French Revolution was not saved?

MOORE: No; everything was lost except this portrait, and I rue the accident that saved it, for I can no longer go up or down stairs without remembering a long past, more real to me than the present moment—the recollections of certain rooms, my grandfather's library, with the old gentleman's portrait over the chimney-piece, the wire-netted bookcases, the round table, the telescope, the view of the lake winding sadly mile after mile by low wooded shores, and my disappointment when I returned the last volume of *Middlemarch* to its place on the shelves. My memories of *Adam Bede* are more explicit. I can still hear, almost hear some of the young squire's words in the scene in which the parson tries to dissuade him—from what, I have forgotten; probably from walking out with Hetty—and I can recall how the story lost its humanity for me when the dairymaid was taken by the police and tried for the murder of her child. The story of a crime is never a good story. Some years ago I read *The Mill on the Floss*, a well-modulated narrative, with the aunts of Maggie Tulliver, each in her house, and her habits, and Maggie Tulliver going to meet a cripple or a hunchback in a pine wood. A delightful, intellectual companionship this was, one that George Eliot's readers thought should continue and end in marriage; but George Eliot knew better than her readers how life is made, and she chose that Maggie's bodily instincts should be awakened by a commonplace young man, who takes her away somewhere in a boat or a barge, I have forgotten which. I was delighted when the young man seized Maggie's bare arm and kissed it, a very natural act, one which a girl would expect who was eloping with a young man, and disappointed when, despite the young man's apologies, tears, and promises of amendment, Maggie returns home.

FREEMAN: You remember the flood, with Maggie and Tom Tulliver in a boat?

MOORE: Yes; and I have nothing to say against the end; it's harmless, it's almost good. But I am thinking now of the passing of

all this literature, as well built as the mill itself, for George Eliot constructed well and wrought well and solidly; her prose is rich and well balanced. But these qualities were not enough to save her from the whirling, bubbling flood of time; her books have gone down like the mill; lighter things have floated; hers have sunk out of sight. And I would seek a reason for the sudden overthrow of one who in her day was looked upon as almost Shakespeare's equal.

FREEMAN: You have known more old Victorians than I have, but I doubt—

MOORE: Doubt not, for I heard Professor Tyrrel, a great scholar, whose Latin and Greek verse was as perfect as such things can be, speak the words that you have just heard me speak: Almost Shakespeare's equal!

FREEMAN: Whereby we may deduce the moral that learning is insufficient.

MOORE: We may, indeed. But I would look into the soul and see why this woman's mind has passed into a dust hardly less anonymous than her body.

FREEMAN: The bent of her mind was towards philosophy rather than imaginative literature, and it was George Henry Lewes who drew her attention to prose narrative as an outlet for her genius.

MOORE: I understand. Even genius is dependent on accident. The accident is always passing; talent misses it, but genius avails itself of it instantly, and George Eliot availed herself of her chance. But that is a side issue; we are seeking the reason why she should have passed into sudden oblivion and others, the Brontës, should remain.

FREEMAN: You admitted that her prose was rich and well balanced, and I agree with you. But there is no pleasure in it.

MOORE: You are quite right; there is very little pleasure in it. But why is there no pleasure in it?

FREEMAN: Something in her character, perhaps.

MOORE: Let us seek her failure in her character. I know she met George Henry Lewes and that is about all I do know of her. Whence came she? Was she a townswoman or a countrywoman? Did she come from the north or the south or the east or the west? Was Lewes her first lover, her second, her third? Tell me all you know about her.

FREEMAN: Her name was Marian Evans, and she came from Warwickshire.

MOORE: From the middle of England, like Shakespeare. Balzac, too, came from the middle of France.

FREEMAN: Her father was land agent to Mr Francis Newdigate, a Warwickshire squire.

MOORE: And she was sent to school. But to what school?

FREEMAN: That I can't tell you, but without doubt to some school in the neighbourhood, perhaps in Warwick. Do you know it?

MOORE: Yes. In my boyhood it was a lovely old English town full of gardens and gables, and associated with the Middle Ages—Warwick Castle, with a bad picture of a man in a cave shown to travelling folk, the very town in which there would be a fine, large, handsome school for young ladies. Birmingham is over the border, but not more than twenty miles away, and she may have been educated in Birmingham.

FREEMAN: Be that as it may, she remained at school till her mother's death, and was then recalled home to look after her father's house; and the change, I have always heard, was welcomed by her, for even in her teens she resented direction in her studies. And at Arbury Farm she applied herself to the French and Italian languages, and I think music was a hobby of hers.

MOORE: I shouldn't have suspected music from her writing. But Nature is ever capricious. Tell me more.

FREEMAN: At Arbury Farm she refused to go to church and nearly quarrelled with her father, and afterwards she began to write for the Westminster Review.

MOORE: I am beginning to understand. And after the publication of two or three articles the Editor wrote asking her to call at the office when she came to London; and in London she made the acquaintance of John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, the inevitable Harriet Martineau, and the desirable George Henry. Can you give me the date when she left Arbury Farm?

FREEMAN: I will inquire the matter out in the library.

MOORE: No matter. She came up to London to participate in the discovery that pleasure was a mistake, almost a vulgarity, and that life would be better without it; for in the 'fifties, and still more in the 'sixties, the philosophers thought they had at last found Nature out. And the arts, determined not to lag behind, became serious; the eighteenth century was spoken of as the

mischievous and shameful century, and the worship of ugliness began in France. I would tell you who began it if I could; there must have been somebody before Courbet, who spoke about truth of effect and local colour. Be this as it may, he was committed to it, and Troyon still more so, and these were followed by Millet, who took it upon himself to explain the miserable lot of the peasant; and whosoever saw it, remembers *L'Homme à la Houe*, a detestable object, but which so stirred the bowels of compassion in everybody that everybody was certain something must be done to relieve the monotony of the peasant's lot. Philanthropy entered into art from that moment. And it is believed that Rosa Bonheur never wore a crinoline, preferring to walk about in breeches and a blouse. She wore clogs and led a life more laborious than that of the cart-horses she painted. Rosa Bonheur—how well the name goes with her pictures! The syllables tramp just like the great grey cart-horse that the peasant rides into the middle of the fair. Rosa Bonheur—was there ever a more cynical name? She only just escaped Rose. Rose Bonheur—a woman in whose life a rose never flourished, and who repudiated happiness! Do you tell me, and quickly, when Marian Evans changed her name to George Eliot.

FREEMAN: But you do not believe that the character of a human being is modified by a name, inherited or assumed? You said just now that Rosa Bonheur's name was in direct contradiction to her character.

MOORE: The name tramps like a cart-horse, and I cannot believe she would have painted the same pictures if her name had been Rose. But Rosa Bonheur is a side issue; we are speaking of George Eliot. Tell me when she changed the name of Marian Evans, a splendid name, and how well it goes with Arbury Farm! I can see myself in my imagination directing an envelope: Miss Marian Evans, Arbury Farm, Warwickshire. Can you tell me when she changed her name?

FREEMAN: I have no exact information. Have you an encyclopaedia?

MOORE: An encyclopaedia in this house! No.

FREEMAN: We may assume for the moment that her first book, the translation of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, was published under the name of George Eliot.

MOORE: Why should we assume that?

FREEMAN: I have told you that her father was much distressed by her refusal to go to church—

MOORE: Had I been her father, I should have said: Marian, I will allow you to omit church if in return you will choose some other name than George Eliot.

FREEMAN: What name would you have suggested to her?

MOORE: Oliver Brunskill.

FREEMAN: There's not much beauty in that name.

MOORE: We mustn't seek beauty in names—character. Do you think my writings would have been the same if I had adopted Annie Grey as my pseudonym? George Henry Lewes, her guide and bugle-call (it was he who first suggested that she should turn her hand to fiction) should have said, when they were debating the pseudonym necessary for *Scenes from Clerical Life*: I do not urge you, Marian, to choose Annie Grey—indeed, I urge you not to choose it; and we can imagine Marian answering: But why, dear George, are you averse from the name George Eliot? It is so uncompromising.

FREEMAN: And what answer would you set down for George Henry Lewes?

MOORE: A name too faintly genteel for you, Marian. The phrase might have risen up in his mind *as genteel as an omnibus*, but he would not have spoken it, and continued: Hardly a man's name, hardly a woman's, without any sex on it. The word *sex* would have frightened Marian, and she would have said that the name was chosen, before she knew him, as a suitable name to go on the title page of a translation of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*. But why continue it? George Henry would have interposed. *Scenes from Clerical Life*, by Marian Evans. To which Marian would have answered drily: I have to consider my father.

FREEMAN: I do not know if the translation was made at Arbury Farm or when she went to London.

MOORE: It can't be helped. In London she adopted the morality of her circle: morality without God, a fantastic theory if ever there was one. Even with God's help men and women stray into the primrose path; how then can we expect them to remain in the strait and narrow way if there be no promise of reward or punishment? An altogether impracticable morality, as is

proved indeed by Marian herself, who went to live with a married man and wrote under his roof *Scenes From Clerical Life* and other admonitory works, hanging herself out like a banner from the roof on which is inscribed the magic word: *Excelsior!*

FREEMAN: Lewes was her single transgression from the moral law.

MOORE: Our information on the subject is too slight to warrant literary investigation, and further transgressions, could they be proved against her, would weaken my argument.

FREEMAN: You think then that the foundations of her style are to be discovered in Lewes?

MOORE: Not in Lewes' writing, but in the double life she was leading.

FREEMAN: You trace George Eliot's style to a conflict between theory and conduct, and I think you are on surer ground now than you were in that fantastic theory that the name we bring into the world or that we assume is accountable for all our acts and thoughts.

MOORE: Encouraged by your sympathy I will venture a little further into a theology which some will regard as casuistical, saying that if she had transgressed oftener her style would no longer be the same. You see, she may have gone to live with Lewes (indeed, it almost looks as if she had) for doctrinal reasons, false doctrine, of course. But if further transgressions could be urged against her we might assume that she was pursuing happiness, and happiness being in her mind would have found an outlet in her works. You see, my dear Mr Freeman, a woman who transgresses frequently, escapes (for some reason which we will not attempt to explore) the Christian conscience, and not having the Christian conscience we must acquit her of the sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin unforgivable on earth or in heaven, the one sin that the Pagan and the Christian world are agreed upon, their detestation being the same.

FREEMAN: If a man or woman cannot accept Christian doctrine you would advocate that he or she should lead a licentious life, escaping thereby from setting a bad example?

MOORE: Licentious life! You fall into the makeshift argument of the preacher who would have us look upon Antiquity as a degrading past of which the least said the better.

FREEMAN: Antiquity affords the highest instances of morality.

MOORE: As I have said, Antiquity and Christianity hold one sin in

equal detestation, and I think I am guilty of no paradox if I say that her style is the outcome of the moral conflict in which she found herself involved, for the thought to defend herself was never out of her mind. But relieved of her load of sin by Christianity or by Paganism (a subtlety which we cannot discuss here, our discussion being confined to discovering the source of her style) she might have written—well, it's impossible to say how she might have written, but certainly more delightfully than she has written.

FREEMAN: You would distinguish between a moral man and a moralist, and I think you are right. And I would add that the moralist is seldom happy.

MOORE: If she had been a happy woman her happiness would have crept into her writings, for what is in the mind finds its way on to the page, an almost needless amplification of your criticism that the moralist is seldom happy. Indeed, an essay might be written by some philosopher, poet, painter, and critic, who would discern in Velasquez an icy spirit who saw no more in his fellows than subjects for portraits or pictures. The critic of whom I am thinking would cry, on turning from Velasquez to Rubens: A happy man! His paintings tell the tale. He meditated no doctrine, and to be free accepted Catholicism outwardly, thereby getting his freedom to wander among nymphs and satyrs without receiving reproofs from Spain. Among modern writers your enemy Stevenson—

FREEMAN: My enemy? No. If, as some people think, I have criticized Stevenson harshly it is because he seems to be taking a place in public estimation higher than he deserves, getting a great deal that was due to Pater. Moreover, the happiness that he expressed seems to me a very superficial kind of happiness, cudgelling a little donkey in the Cevennes!

MOORE: At once you bring in a morality which casts a gloom upon the radiant pages of *Travels With a Donkey*.

FREEMAN: He did not keep religion out of his writings; he remained a sour Protestant. He could not visit the monks without commenting, and adversely, on the mode of life they chose to adopt, and in the *Inland Voyage* he is also ready to advance the claims of Protestantism against those of Rome; and in his essay on Villon he never ceases to thank God that he was not himself like Villon. No; I think you would have done better

to have left Stevenson out of this argument. Morris would have supplied you with a better example, for men fight and love and wander in his poems as they do in Homer.

MOORE: The visible world was enough for the Greek and the English poet, and all that you say in praise of Morris I will applaud, hat in hand. A greater poet than Stevenson, I grant you; still— But let us not wrangle, but agree that ancient literature was happier than modern. Homer's fighting, though heavy-handed, is always light-hearted. The wanderings of Odysseus are untouched by melancholy, and Virgil, too, and Horace are free from this bane.

FREEMAN: Your chronicle runs too fast, for we have come to imperial Rome, overlooking Sicily.

MOORE: Yes; you are quite right. I had forgotten Sicily, and thank you for reminding me. How the very name of Theocritus brings up before our eyes sunny hillsides, with shepherds gathered under tamarisk trees, and for single ornament a torrent dashing over the face of the high rock. More real, more true are these than George Eliot's Norfolk farms. The shepherds and shepherdesses have come down to us from more than two thousand years, gaining in every generation, it would seem, a new and more intense life. Battus is clearer to us now than he was, perhaps, to his creator, certainly more real than Tom Tulliver is to me, or his sister Maggie. And the incident of the thorn that Corydon plucked from Battus' foot under the ankle we would not exchange for the story of the flood.

FREEMAN: I would certainly not give up Amaryllis for Maggie Tulliver.

MOORE: All her walks with the cripple in the pine wood are not worth the verses in which we read that Battus goes to Amaryllis' cave to plead his love, saying that if she refuses him he will die at her feet. He says some lovely things to her: Lo, ten apples I bring thee, plucked from that very place where thou didst bid me pluck them, and others to-morrow I will bring thee. Ah, regard my heart's deep sorrow! ah, would I were that humming bee, and to thy cave might come dipping beneath the fern that hides thee, and the ivy leaves!

FREEMAN: In such words as these we reach immortality.

MOORE: Ah, lovely as thou art to look upon, ah heart of stone, ah dark-browed maiden, embrace me, thy true goatherd, that I may

kiss thee, and even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight! In the simple words, even in empty kisses there is a sweet delight, he reaches to the very heart of the sensual instinct. The unfortunate goatherd continues to plead, but for the moment I am at the end of my memories.

FREEMAN: Theocritus records not the answers of Amaryllis; not a word do we hear her speak. And in the next Idyll Battus and Corydon, two neatherds, meet, and after some random banter their talk turns on the death of Amaryllis.

MOORE: Ah, gracious Amaryllis! Thee alone even in death will we ne'er forget. Dear to me as my goats wert thou, and thou art dead! Alas, too cruel a spirit hath my lot in his keeping. That is all we know of Amaryllis, and the scene of this great love grief is described in an anecdote—the plucking out of a thorn that has run into Battus' foot under the ankle. Battus' sighs for Amaryllis were the first, but they were not the last. The world has continued ever since to sigh for Amaryllis. Is it her name that has given her an immortality that has endured for more than two thousand years, and given immortality to a hind like Battus? For we like him when he says: I will sing no more, but dead will I lie where I fall, and here may the wolves devour me. This rough goatherd was a true lover. Why are these hinds and shepherdesses immortal, Mr Freeman? Why are they real? Why are they enough? Because his Idylls tell of happy days and men and women who lead happy lives, following their flocks and their instincts. It would be hard to find an unhappy day in his pages, not even the two fishermen who wake up in their broken hut with nothing before them but another toilsome day in search of food, two old men at the end of their lives who will one day be unable to put forth again. What is sadder than this end of old age? Yet Theocritus brings into his story a dream. Tell me, says one old man, the vision of the night; nay, tell all to thy friend. And the fisherman tells of the dream in which he hooked a fish with golden scales, and the great difficulty he had to bring it on shore. You remember?

FREEMAN: Yes; and the answer to forget the dream and *seek the fish of flesh, lest thou die of famine with all thy dreams of gold!*

MOORE: To that answer, so beautiful and so wise, a modern writer

would add a sickly page of homilies. Even the genius of Wordsworth could not redeem him from the curse of morality. You remember his Leech-gatherer? Had we to choose between The Leech-gatherer and the fisherman, we should choose the earlier story, with regret, perhaps, but we should choose it. Wordsworth we read in his own metre; Theocritus we read in a translation in which much must be lost; yet how much remains in the most beautiful translation ever made! You were saying?

FREEMAN: I was going to remind you of a story in verse by George Eliot of a girl who loved a king, and who for the king's sake refused to marry her lover; but the king, hearing of her broken faith, sent for her and kept her in his court till she began to perceive that he was only a man like another—

MOORE: And robbed of her illusions, she returned to her betrothed; and with him George Eliot leaves the girl, satisfied that she has acquiesced in all the prejudices and conventions of her time, that she has paid homage to them. Of Nature there is not a trace, poor, outcast Nature!

FREEMAN: You don't think that the intimacy of the king would have checked the girl's admiration of him and turned it back to its source, the young man that she had discarded?

MOORE: No, indeed, I do not think so, not unless the king had possessed himself of the girl's affections and wearied of them; then of course, she might have picked up the thread she had dropped.

FREEMAN: Is not your view very cynical?

MOORE: That is how you like to take it—do you prefer truth or lies? Ah, here is Mabel bringing in the tea; you'll stay and have a cup with me, won't you?

II

MOORE: You will have another cup?

FREEMAN: No, thank you.

MOORE: A cigar?

FREEMAN: No, thank you; I don't smoke.

MOORE: Not even a cigarette?

FREEMAN: No, thank you.

MOORE: So you like Mr Hardy's poems better than his novels?

FREEMAN: Yes; I think he writes verse better than prose, occasionally somewhat awkwardly; but in both, in verse and prose,

he has helped the ordinary man to realize pessimism as a theory of life. He has massed it, brought it before us in a solid block.

MOORE: But pessimism as a theory is as old as the world. To go no further back than Ecclesiastes, we find not a few admirable phrases depicting the worthlessness of life; and in Shakespeare we find phrases even more beautiful. If you had said that Mr Hardy popularized pessimism and coaxed his readers into drinking from an old tin pot a beverage that had hitherto been offered to them only in golden and jewelled goblets, I should have agreed with you. You were speaking just now of Mr Hardy's stories in verse. I have read one of these, and as an example of how to make pessimism seem trivial I think it would be difficult to find a better story than the one telling of a dead woman's dog that cannot be persuaded to leave her grave, and how disappointed all the family are when they discover that he is not trying to scratch up his dead mistress, but a bone that he has buried.

FREEMAN: You have not chosen a happy example of Mr Hardy's art. I could show you some poems that I think even you would find some merit in. I remember that in speaking of a certain Irish writer you say he is sufficiently a poet to become a great prose writer.

MOORE: The best prose is usually written by poets—Shakespeare wrote the best seventeenth century and Shelley the best nineteenth; and I do not think I am going too far when I say that Mr Hardy has written the worst, I will hear your protest afterwards. Allow me to read:

"The persistent torrent from the gurgyle's jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave. The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate. The water accumulated and washed deeper down, and the roar of the pool thus formed spread into the night as the head and chief among other noises of the kind created by the deluging rain. The flowers so carefully planted by Fanny's repentant lover began to move and writhe in their beds. The winter violets turned slowly upside down and became a mere mat of mud. Soon the snowdrop and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron. Plants of the tufted species were loosened, rose to the surface, and floated off.

. . . The pool upon the grave had soaked away into the ground, and in its place was a hollow. The disturbed earth was washed away over the grass and pathway in the guise of the brown mud he had already seen, and it spotted the marble tombstone with the same stains. Nearly all the flowers were washed clean out of the ground, and they lay, roots upwards, on the spots whither they had been splashed by the stream."

FREEMAN: From what book are you reading?

MOORE: Far From the Madding Crowd.

FREEMAN: One of his best books!

MOORE: Then I have done him no injustice in quoting from it.

The gargoyle may direct its vengeance, but not the torrent.

FREEMAN: Would you mind reading the passage again?

MOORE: "The persistent torrent from the gurgyle's jaws directed all its vengeance into the grave."

FREEMAN: I suppose you are right.

MOORE: "The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate." Can that image be defended?

FREEMAN: Nobody seeks to defend it.

MOORE: A pool does not roar, and flowers do not writhe, and when

Mr Hardy tells us that the violets turned slowly upside down, my thoughts are directed to ducks in a pond, despite the fact that ducks turn quickly upside down. "Soon the snowdrop and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron." Is a cauldron the image that would rise up in the mind of a poet, and would he use the word *ingredients*? "Nearly all the flowers were washed clean (*sic*) out of the ground, and they lay, roots upwards, on the spots whither they had been splashed by the stream." You appreciate the *whither*, I hope?

FREEMAN: Slips occur in the very best writers.

MOORE: Good writers do not usually slip in every line, and of all, when they are attempting a purple passage.

FREEMAN: Do you think that he chose Fanny Robin's grave as suitable for fine writing?

MOORE: Had there not been purple in his eye, he would have written: The pour of water from the gurgyle washed away the grave-mound. A simple statement was all that was needed, and perhaps the very first among our literary instincts is the one that

tells us the theme that may be developed and the theme that offers no opportunities for development. A writer who describes an omnibus after having said it was red lacks the literary instinct. And I think that even if we overlook the extraordinary number of grammatical mistakes, we find the essential Mr Hardy in the description of Fanny Robin's grave. It has become a habit to limit style to a choice of words; but it's much more. We can have style though the choice of words may be casual and undistinguished. Pater speaks of style as unity of subject and language; there was something else, too, but having forgotten what is the third quality that makes for style I will add something of my own: that style is a summary of all the writer has seen and heard and thought, wherefore if the style be confused and turgid the story will limp painfully from a feeble beginning to a dim and confused close.

FREEMAN: If you do not like *Far From the Madding Crowd* I am afraid you will not like *The Trumpet Major*, and I doubt if your patience will bear you to the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It begins well, but halfway through—

MOORE: I do not propose to read *Daniel Deronda*, and neither do I propose to read all Mr Hardy's novels, for has it not been said that to have eaten a crust of bread is to have tasted of all the stars? I have read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and my doubts began when Alec came riding by and called her to jump up behind him, and rode away with her into a wood. A wood may be large or small; it may wander hither and thither, or grow in patches. A wood may be dense, dark, solemn, forbidding, or it may be blithe, enticing, with delightful interspaces; it may be overgrown with scrub, littered with uncouth rocks, or it may be smooth. A wood may have the wet, close smell of an ancient marsh, or it may be fragrant as a garden.

FREEMAN: It was not the wood that mattered, but *Tess*, and a long description—

MOORE: A wood may be described in two words. When Scott wrote: "Land of brown heath and scraggy wood," we are in Scotland. But the woods and fields that Mr Hardy speaks of are never before our eyes. I think he tells us that Alec rode some distance into the wood and made a couch for *Tess* in the dead leaves. He buttons his overcoat round her shoulders and

goes away for a little while, and returns to find her asleep. The situation is one which seems to Mr Hardy opportune for a meditation, wherefore he begins:

"But, some might say, where was Tess's guardian angel? where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked. Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive,"

a sentence, Mr Freeman, that nobody but a poet could have written. The French have a good word for this kind of story: *coco*, and *coco* may be translated into English as Mother Goose. After the incident in the wood Tess returns to her home, and about a year afterwards we read of her in a cornfield with a baby, who is taken ill and whom she baptizes herself in the middle of the night. When the baby dies Tess continues to work in her parents' house, and then becomes a dairymaid; and in the dairy she meets Angel Clare, whom she marries, without, however, telling him that she has had a baby. But on the night of the wedding she makes up her mind to confess everything to him, and is glad when Angel Clare confides to her the fact he had once: "plunged into eight and forty hours' dissipation with a stranger," and that he has "never repeated the offence." You will see, Mr Freeman, that the interest of the story concentrates not so much on Tess' confession, but on the character the author gives to the confession, for, like a wood, a confession can take every kind of shape. George Eliot would have said to herself: Angel Clare may persuade her to confess; he may be anxious to know the truth for pure motives, or he may be anxious to know the truth for impure motives; he may be willing to hear, and then unwilling to hear. It may be that Mr Hardy did not consider the different sides from which the scene might be viewed, or it may be that he considered them all and came to the conclusion that his imagination could not reveal to him the words that Tess would speak to Angel Clare. Discretion is said

to be the better part of valour, and Mr Hardy's discretion was a rapid retreat into the past indefinite:

"And pressing her forehead against his temple she entered on the story of her acquaintance with Alec D'Urberville and its results, murmuring the words without flinching, and with her eyelids drooping down."

FREEMAN: You are of opinion, then, Mr Moore, that if a man loves a woman he would just ask her: Is it all over? Do you see the man now? And if she said no, that she now loves for the first time, he would say: Don't let's speak about this any more. You have repented of your sin, and I have repented of mine.

MOORE: You cast searching glances into my soul, Mr Freeman, and I admit willingly that this is how I think George Eliot would have written the scene; or if she felt she couldn't write it, for one reason or another, she would have contrived a construction of the story that would have enabled her to speak truthfully. I am willing to believe that Mr Hardy felt the story had begun to stagger a little and required some romantic incident to restore the reader's confidence in it. Angel Clare is given to walking in his sleep, and one night picking Tess out of her bed he carries her quite a long way—if my memory does not trip me—several hundred yards, crossing the river by means of a narrow plank. What I am going to say seems incredible, but I remember certainly something about an Abbey and a stone coffin, in which he lays Tess. I have forgotten for how long she lies in the coffin, but remember that she takes her sleep-walking husband by the arm and leads him home. As I read how they approached the house, I said to myself: We are coming to something more original than a wedding night parting due to a confession. He will put Tess into his own bed, and on awakening he will take her in his arms—a daring piece of craftsmanship! and my mind softened towards Mr Hardy. But only for a moment, alas, for Tess persuades Angel Clare to lie down on his bed and retires to her own room. The next morning they drive a little way together; he leaves the carriage, bids her good-bye, and Tess returns home to her mother, and henceforth we see her getting her living as best she can in the fields.

FREEMAN: You do admit that we see Tess at work in the turnip fields.

MOORE: A solitary figure in a turnip field is a distinct feature in the landscape, and Mr Hardy did not miss it; indeed, we could almost wish that he had, so often have we seen this figure in pictures, as often, or very nearly as often, as we have seen harvesters returning with a dancing step from the fields, scythes over their shoulders, and a moon three times too big behind their heads.

FREEMAN: You are thinking, surely, of George Mason's picture of harvesters?

MOORE: Perhaps I am; it would not surprise me if the picture you speak of got mixed up in my memories of Tess, so entirely in keeping are the dancing harvesters and the moon three times too big with the seducer, who returns in clerical garb and disappears from the story, returning again for Tess to murder him with a carving knife and the blood to soak through the ceiling, and for Tess to be hanged later on, after spending a splendid honeymoon among the monoliths of Stonehenge, with Angel Clare waiting outside the prison to see the black flag run up.

FREEMAN: Have you ever seen any plays by Mr Henry Arthur Jones?

MOORE: Yes; I have seen a good many.

FREEMAN: You know what Oscar Wilde's advice to dramatists was? He said that there were three rules to be observed; the first rule was not to write like Mr Henry Arthur Jones.

MOORE: And what were the second and third rules?

FREEMAN: They were the same as the first. And if you were called upon to give advice to young novelists, I think you would adopt Oscar Wilde's formula.

MOORE: It's curious that you should mention Mr Henry Arthur Jones, for if Henry Arthur had written novels I think they would have been very like Mr Hardy's, only better written. I remember speaking these words to William Archer, who asked me if I had ever seen Mr Hardy. I said that I hadn't, and he answered: Well, you'd be surprised at the likeness. I am not speaking of the mental likeness, but of the physical likeness, which is very striking: same height, same build, same type of face, same complexion. A few days afterwards in the Academy Mr Hardy was pointed out to me going round the pictures with

his wife, and I said: Archer is right; the two men are very like each other.

FREEMAN: The subject of your charge is that Mr Hardy is often melodramatic; but I don't think anybody would deny that he does, on occasions, avail himself of exaggeration, of emphasis. His admirers, and I know one or two, would answer you that Mr Hardy was only following in the footsteps of Shakespeare, and they would speak of the three witches in Macbeth, of the two murderers interrupted by the comic porter, of Banquo's ghost, and many other melodramatic scenes. Nor would their inquiry be limited to Macbeth. Hamlet rises frequently into melodrama, or, as you would put it, lapses frequently into melodrama. It seems to me that you are bringing into this criticism a great deal of your own temperament. You don't like melodrama, and you are right not to like it, for whenever you get an effect it is by understatement rather than by overstatement; but that is not a reason why you should condemn a method which is employed by both Mr Hardy and Shakespeare.

MOORE: The charge is often brought against the critic that his criticism is no more than a reflection of his own temperament. How else could it be, since all he sees, hears, feels, and knows, is but a reflection of his temperament? We have no exact knowledge of anything. But I think my best answer to your defence of melodrama is that there is melodrama that rises into the empyrean, and melodrama unredeemed by poetry. The first walks with divine gait, in silken raiment and with stars in her hair, whilst the other proceeds with shambling gait from ale-house to ale-house, and the deeds that are done appeal to the eye and ear rather than to the mind. Shakespeare appeals to all the senses, it is true, but he never fails to appeal to the mind. Macbeth's deeds and Hamlet's are transported into art, and are therefore only understood by the few, though they may be undoubtedly relished by the many.

FREEMAN: You remind me of Don Quixote charging the wind-mills, mills that only exist in his imagination. Nobody compares Tess and Jude the Obscure with Hamlet or Macbeth.

MOORE: Oh, yes, they do! Several articles have appeared in which analogies are discovered between Jude the Obscure and Prometheus Bound, and I would not advise any critic who valued the world's opinions to challenge these appreciations.

FREEMAN: I certainly hope that you do not speak to others as openly as you do to me.

MOORE: You would not like, then, truth to prevail?

FREEMAN: Like Pilate, I ask you: What is truth? Your judgement is at variance with opinions that proceed from the highest to the lowest. Everybody believes—

MOORE: The entire Press believes, and would shed the last drop of its ink in defence of the literary opinions of the many.

FREEMAN: You would then set aside the literary opinions of the many? Even that of your friend, Mr Edmund Gosse, who salutes Mr Hardy as "the poet who is, without dispute, the head of the literary profession, and, so I believe, the first of living men of letters in the world?"

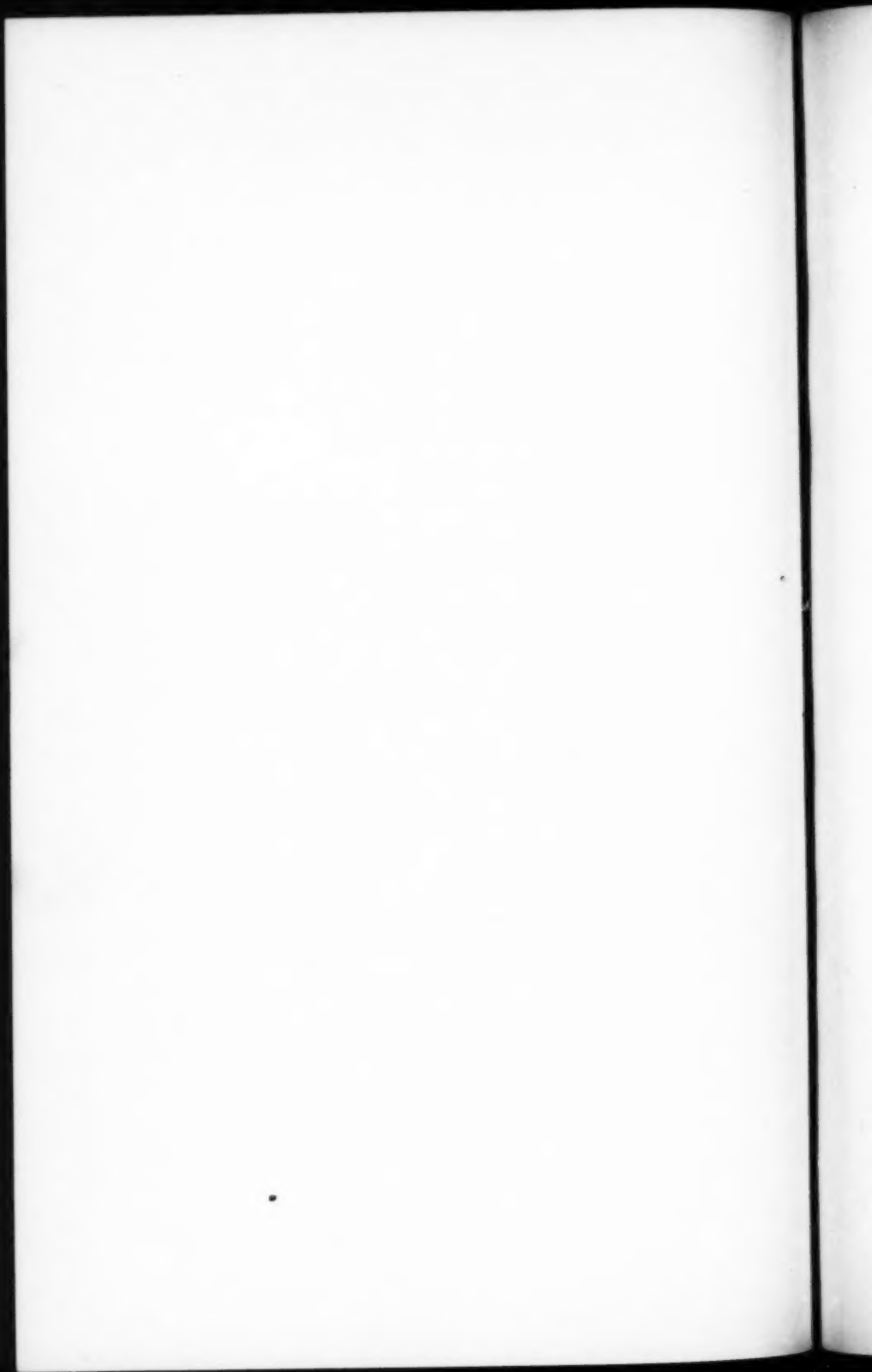
MOORE: Mr Gosse speaks out of his lights, and I speak out of mine, and I do not think that anything would be gained by my decrying his as a false light and mine as a true. A great deal of what I am saying, Mr Freeman, will appear in print as soon as Mr Hardy steps on board Charon's boat.

FREEMAN: You think that others share your opinions and are probably at this moment anxious to utter them, but refrain. . . .

MOORE: But refrain from good taste. Like many another, Mr Hardy is surrounded by misguided friends, who only think of his mortal life, but I am concerned with his immortal life and would save him from the wrath of Apollo. I would send him over in Charon's boat to meet Apollo in a more devout spirit than Mr Gosse's words inspire. I am thinking of what possible indiscretions Mr Hardy may be guilty of when he advances to meet the God; it may be hardly possible for him to restrain some words or gestures of familiarity. It may be that with confident air he will ask the God to point out his (Mr Hardy's) seat to him; or it may be that he will seek his seat himself, and not finding it next to Shakespeare or Aeschylus, he will return and complain to Apollo, who will ask: Who is this one? One of the God's messengers will answer: This is Hardy, the author of *Tess*, and *Jude the Obscure*. And the author of these works, the God will reply, would seek a seat next to Aeschylus and Shakespeare! It would be vain for the messengers to try to pacify the angry God—but I will not look further into the future. The depths of Hades may not be reached by human eyes.



A DRAWING. BY WILLIAM ZORACH



THE CRYSTAL SUN

BY YVOR WINTERS

Lean spring came in,
A living tide of green,
White foam of blossom;
I, a child,
Barefooted on the clear sand,
Saw the sun fall
Straight and sharp in air;
And I, afraid of horses,
Screamed in surprise
As the mare spun
Knee-high in yellow flowers.

The stones
That held the hills,
The sky that held
The sun and all its
Spreading rays were of one
Substance

and my God

Lay at my feet
And spoke from out
My shadow, eyed me
From the bees.
And he was not, or
Else I—none could
Say.

The Chinamen

Amid the lemon grove
Lived with pale women
And ate dogs and sang
All night.

What wonder, then,
That I went mad

THE CRYSTAL SUN

Amid the cloudy stone
And looked at
Print

 more beautiful
Than women, till
The earth took form
In my place,
 at my feet.

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ARISTIDE MAILLOL

BY WALTER AGARD

BORN in Provence, a country of all Western lands most like Greece, Aristide Maillol has among moderns come closest to achieving the *Allgemeinheit* of the Olympia pedimental sculptors and Polyclitus. Banyuls-sur-Mer gave him in his youth serene skies, clear outlines, a sinewy countryside of drowsy orchards shimmering in the hot sun, wrapped in violet mist at dusk, silver in moonlight; and people who now, as in the days of the princes of Les Baux, live a full-flavoured, sensuous life. "For the waves of the centuries and their tempests and their horrors in vain distract the people and efface frontiers. Maternal Earth, Nature, always nourishes her sons with the same milk; from her hard breasts she will still provide for the olive the fine oil." These are the words of Frédéric Mistral, their poet, who speaks of his countrymen as a race of eagles, an ancient people, proud and free.

*"Di grand famiho prouvençalo,
Raço d'eigloun, jamai vassalo,"*

with their soul joyous, fiery and vigorous.

*"Amo de longo renadivo,
Amo jouiouse e fiero e vivo."*

It has been frequently pointed out that the regeneration of French art has come from the provinces. None of them can claim so great credit in the visual arts as Provence: witness Cézanne and Maillol.

Paul Gauguin was Maillol's early master in design, a teacher of spacious effects, forms broadly conceived and generously grouped. But although he was interested in painting and more especially in tapestry design, Maillol recognized that only in stone and bronze could he secure the amplitude and suavity that he most cherished. No sculptor has ever better loved stone as stone, or shaped his ex-

pression in stricter conformity to his material. As Roger Fry has pointed out, Rodin's unity lies in the perfection of each part, the subtlety of modelling within the *morceau*, whereas Maillol's lies in the proper relation of all the parts to a completely realized whole. Eliminating all but the essential planes, employing splendid generalizations, he creates figures which are indivisible entities. Like a potter, someone has said, he moulds his clay always with a vision of the final form in mind.

Compare his *Flora* with Antenor's *Kore*. Both have the same plastic volume. They differ chiefly in the fact that the *Kore* has characteristically Greek intellectual clarity, whereas Maillol's is more sensuous. The sixth century B. C. figure is also of a more aristocratic stamp; her garment is more mannered; she is a sister of those coquettish maidens in the Acropolis Museum. Maillol's is more rustic in type, disdainful of tribute, placidly offering her plenty. Study the head. Every feature is simplified; the eyes, with their narrow, sharply-cut lids, the hair a smooth, undifferentiated mass, the frank and fearless face, with its broad brow, full, sober lips, and ample cheeks in planes that fluidly merge into each other. So also in the body; over the full breasts and the flanks the drapery clings like wet silk, with only a few folds indicated, and those in quietly undulating curves. Like the flesh planes, it is continuous, without one rigid line, one distracting angle. The figure is invested with dignity; the arms are permitted no gesture; even though displaying the girdle of flowers they remain pressed to the sides; and the feet are planted surely, with the left advanced only to relieve the effect of rigidity. This is no agitated *Flora*, rioting with Cupids and cornucopias. She suggests, instead, the expansiveness and inclusiveness of the earth itself.

For another suggestive comparison, place Maillol's *Adolescence* beside Rodin's *Age of Bronze*. Maillol's modelling is not so restlessly realistic; his figure is set quietly, without strain, and all the planes are subdued. The lower part of the body rises as surely as a column, in a long, elegant line, while the graceful detail is reserved for the upper part. The hair is indicated by a very few blunt incisions. This is realistic only in comparison with such a figure as the so-called *Idolino* in Florence, a work of the Polyclitan school and a masterpiece of cool simplification.

This same sense for graceful line and continuous volumes may be

studied in his bronze girl swathed in clinging drapery. Her form is revealed by the garment she wears, yet the drapery is an indivisible part of the figure, and one can hardly tell where the flesh leaves off and the undulating cloth begins. Her face, too, is placid, yet firm; the hair is merely a mass; the planes of the face melt into each other, the arms, torso, and drapery unite to form an organic whole. The figure is indivisibly one.

Maillol's apprenticeship was served in the museums. He learned especially of the Greeks and the Egyptians the values of mass, of closely-related volumes. His later expression has been more original and shows a discipline, self-imposed, in simplicity. He has cared especially for figures of nudes, representing them sitting placidly with one arm gently raised, standing with arms raised to the head, kneeling, or crouching. In all of them the positions are obviously symmetrical ones; there is no apparent effort, not the least suggestion of agitation or strain. This is that continuity, that luminous serenity, sought in vain by Rodin.

If the faces seem stolid and not only unfeeling, but positively incapable of passion, turn to his work in bronze to see another expression of his rich nature. Monsieur M is a head charged with the rude vigour and dramatic intensity of that race of bronzed men, the natives of Provence. This face is one foursquare to all winds, with deep caverns of eyes in the swarthy cheeks, almost a diagrammatic scheme of blunt wrinkles, a mass of hair with only a few summary indications of separated masses. Maillol is not quiescent, even if his forms are ample and expansive. In him a deep fire smoulders. He has stored his serene shapes with vitality.

Perhaps the most definite impression one gets from Maillol's work is the sense of poise, of perfectly-adjusted balance. Of this the best figure is his delightful Seated Woman. It is a figure designed in a sequence of flowing curves which are perfectly related. See the indication of security in the right arm and the firmly-set left leg, the grace of the belly line reinforced by the left arm, the quiet repose of the pensive head. Regarded from different angles, this figure presents a constantly changing series of soothing contours, of epic rhythms. It avoids an extreme of which Maillol is sometimes guilty. Like so many of his contemporaries, he has often chosen fat models, pudgy, and positively ugly. This is true of his Pomone. The type has appealed in an unfortunate way to

many of the moderns; they have been carried away by a passion for sheer bulk. Luckily Maillol's work is not limited to this type.

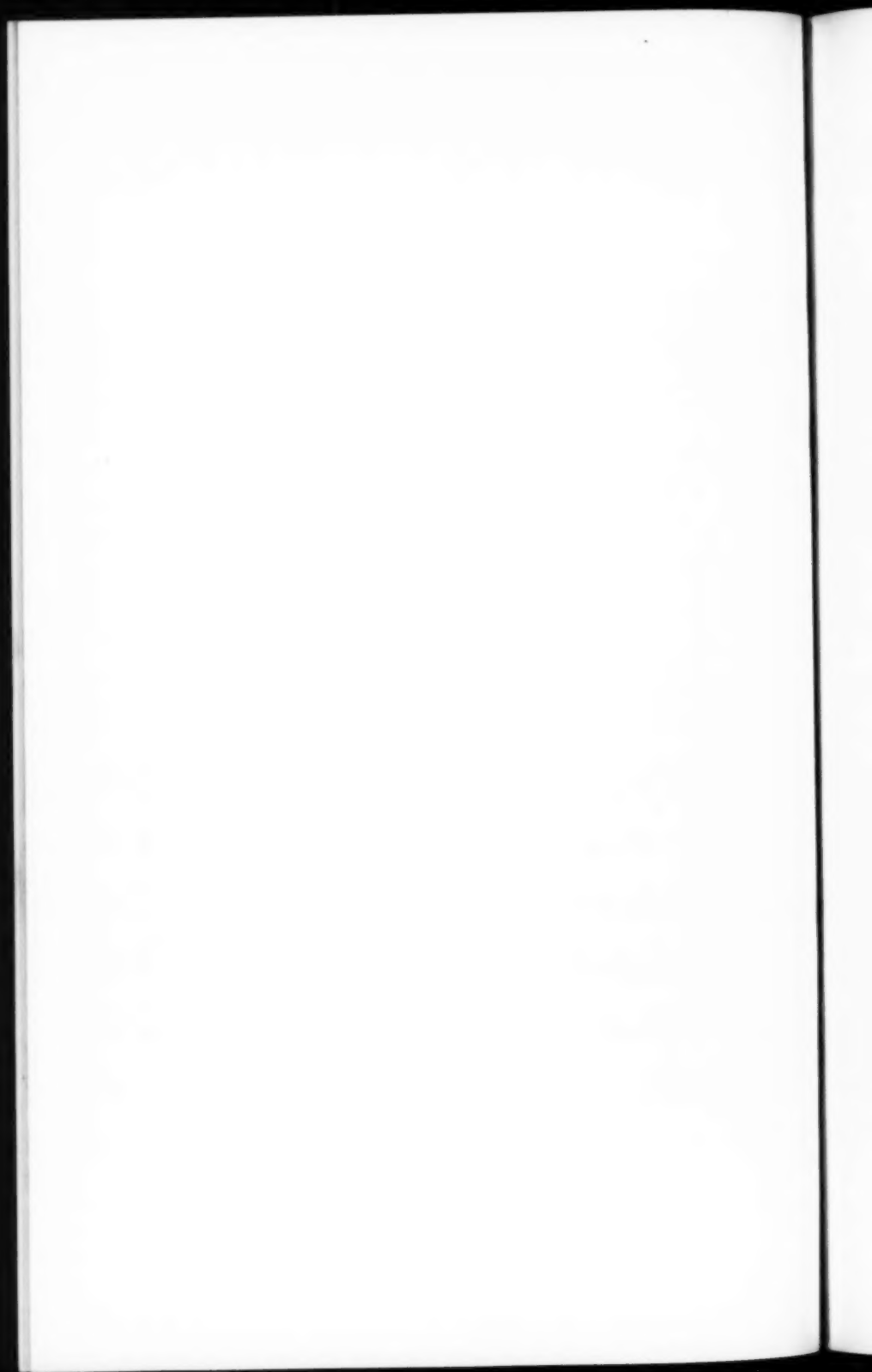
It is fitting that Maillol should have been given the commission for the memorial to Cézanne. For while it is true that Constantin Meunier was the pioneer in modern sculpture, as Cézanne was in painting, it may be said that Maillol has followed the lead of Meunier and has perfected that technique more intelligently than any other sculptor. He has never received proper recognition. But we need not wonder at that. His temperament is too equable, his technique too unspectacular, his synthesis seemingly too simple, to put him in tune with our times. But it may be that he is doing that sort of work, luminous and serene, which Rodin predicted would be the art of the days to come.

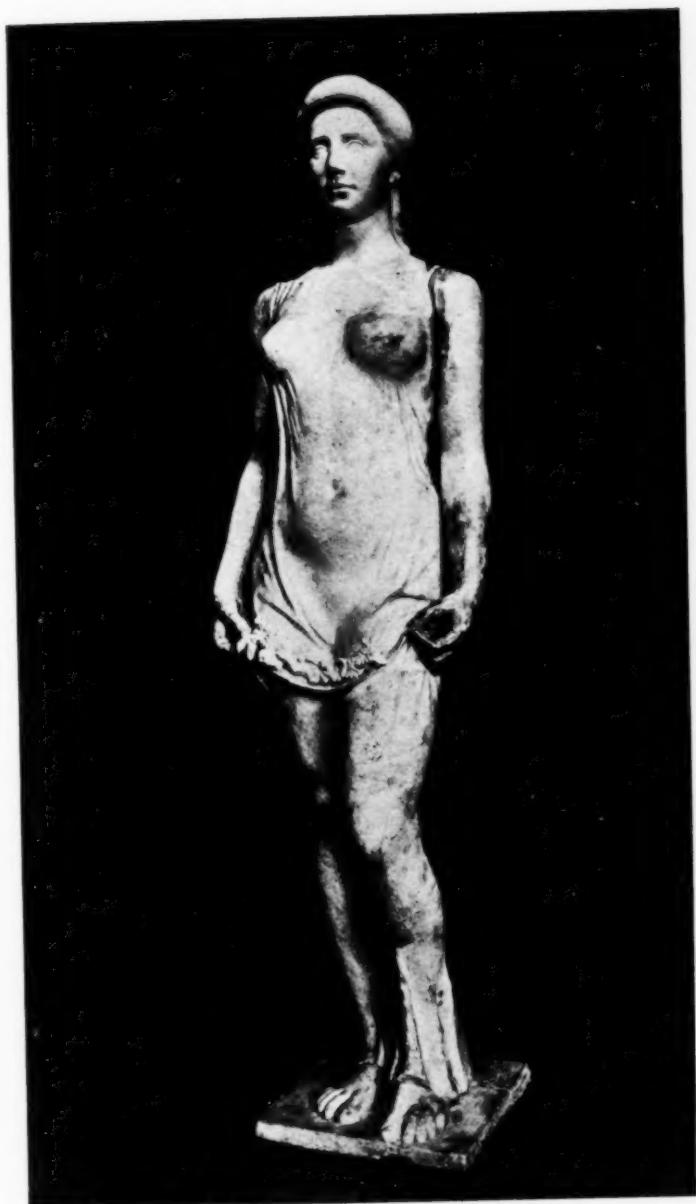
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Photograph: Druet

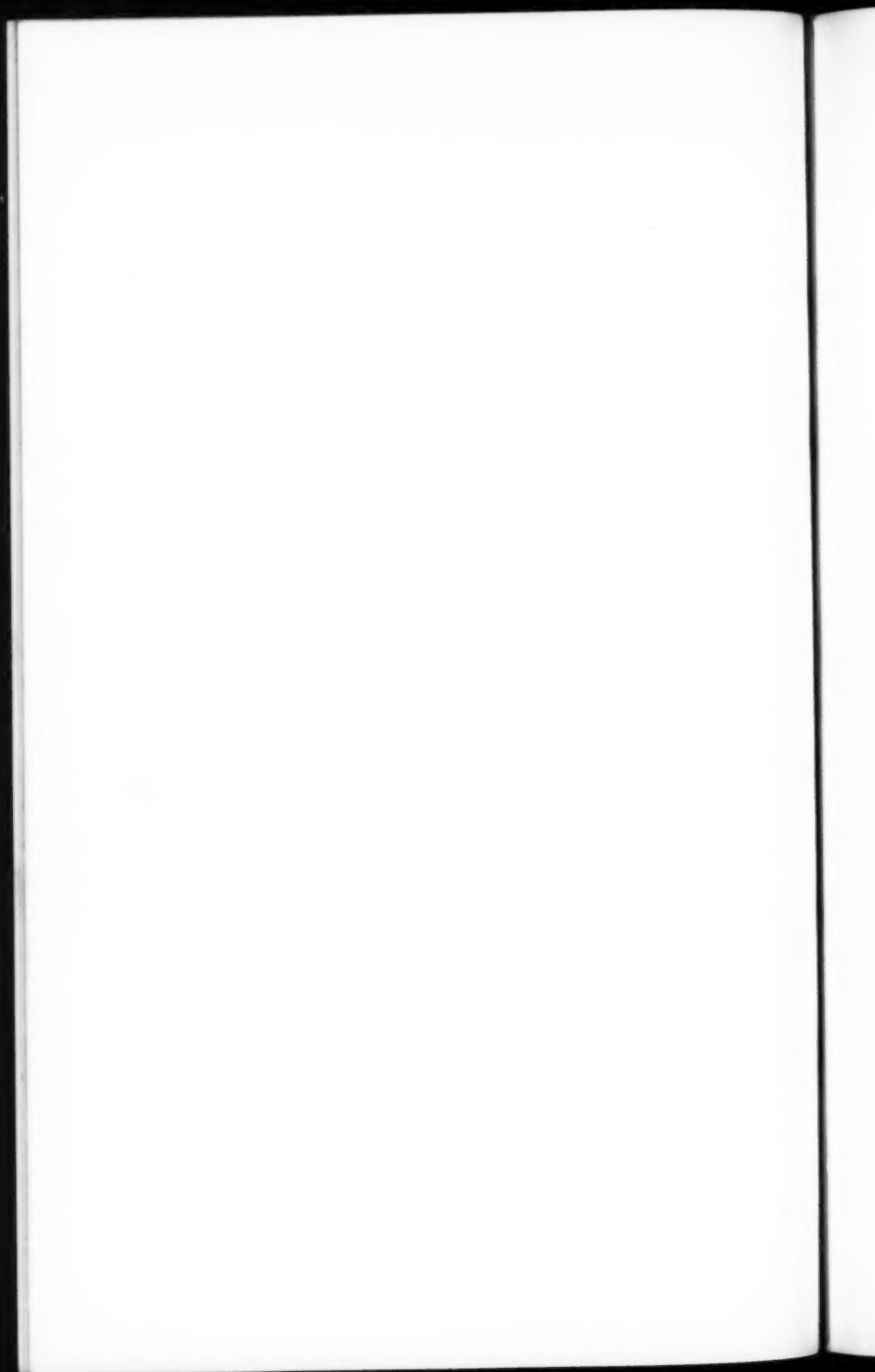
ADOLESCENCE. BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL





Photograph: Druet

FLORA. BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL.





Photograph: Druet

GIRL. BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL

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GERMAN LETTER

September, 1923

OUR theatre . . . oh, do not let me spend many words on our theatre! It is in decay, like our highways, and like the whole martyred nation whose economic and social collapse the world awaits with such astonishing indifference. Christianity! Have you not yet learned that the cry over "Huns and Barbarians" was not seriously meant, that it was an implement of war, a piece of pious lying propaganda? Shall a noble member of the family of white peoples perish and die before the eyes of her phlegmatic cousins through the fault of an effective but stupid advertisement? . . . I beg forgiveness. I am already quiet. I am speaking of our theatre and am announcing that its condition leaves much to be desired. For some time you have known more about the great voices from our operas than we. Our corps of singers is a little like Demeter's daughter, the lovely Persephone, who was stolen by Pluto (the god of wealth, if I am not mistaken) and persuaded to taste the fruits of his realm, whereby she became his for at least the half of each year. Meanwhile the divine mother (the German public) wanders disconsolately through the devastated fields. Not a bad picture, these devastated fields, to give an idea of the German opera in its entirety. It is going downhill. Naturally the national impoverishment shows up first in this *de luxe* article. It is threatened with shabbiness, and of all things that is the last quality which can fit with the notion of the opera, the notion of splendour and material luxury. The leaders of this institution are struggling against this depletion; and so the strongest and the most brilliant of them—who are not compelled to struggle under this depletion and to whom the world stands open—are not to be held at their posts, nor is there any adequate substitution for them.

Such was the case with Bruno Walter, who left the Munich opera-house some time ago amid endless ceremonies of departure, after ten years of the most triumphant guidance there as general music conductor. I name him because a short time ago he visited America, where—unless our papers exaggerated patriotically—he

met with extraordinary successes. He is undoubtedly a composer of the first rank, a musical genius of great power and intensity. Trained under Mahler in Vienna—Mahler's bust by Rodin adorns his work-room, and he has made his friendship with Mahler and his recollections of him into a glowing cult—he is certainly a softer, less abrupt and Caesarian nature than the master; but his relationship to his art is just as absolute in earnestness and fervour, and he is an incomparable interpreter of the symphonic struggles which this tragic worshipper had with genius. Walter's services to the art of the Bavarian capital deserved all the honours which were afforded him at his departure. He enlivened the orchestra, dignified the repertoire, and enriched the *ensemble* with distinguished talents, such as Frau Ivogün, Frau Reinhardt, and the baritone Schipper. His restorations, particularly of works from the German romantic sphere, as *Undine*, *Hans Heiling*, *Oberon*, were events. It was he who stood godfather to Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, a work which, regardless of how one now feels towards its mild melancholy, its unfriendliness to life, stands in any case head and shoulders above all the rest of contemporary opera as an intellectual accomplishment. Walter laid the way for it. Further, he was no less effective in the concert hall than in the conductor's chair at the opera. Many critics felt compelled to insist that there are more rigorous rhythmists; but no one disputed his unparalleled sense of sound-values. He is the most subtle, the most thoroughly musical accompanist at the piano, I have ever seen. No one who has heard Schubert's *Winterreise* done by him and Van Roy can forget it. In Vienna I saw an audience of two thousand deeply moved at his playing in company with the violinist Arnold Rosé.

Walter's last act as conductor of the Munich state opera was an evening of one-acters which captivated as much by their inherent charm as by their rich significance historically. He played Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, this tragic pastoral in which more than one accent gives a premonition of Wagner; he followed with Pergolese's charming *Serva Padrona*, which prepared the way for the opera bouffe and Mozart; and he finished with a German musical comedy of the eighteenth century, Schenk's *Dorfbarbier*, which leads in a straight line to the Waffenschmid and Nicolai's *Lustige Weber*. I hardly need to excuse myself for speaking of an opera performance which took place so long back; for the mere fact that I return to this subject after so great a time indicates the unusual

pertinacity of the impression which it produced. For the costumes and decorations an artist had been secured who, long known as an original graphic artist, has only recently begun employing his imagination and his taste in the service of the theatre: Emil Preetorius, a native of Darmstadt who is living in Munich. What he gave us to look at was, in its gradation from the idyllic and the heroic through the *bourgeois* and the elegant to the humoristic and the popular, extraordinarily delicate and felicitous. And since Walter had given the whole of his industry and love to the study of the musical part, and furthermore since the best resources of our theatre were brought forward, a truly glorious evening resulted. I should like especially to say something about *Acis and Galatea*, this splendid work which one hardly ever met with in the theatre, and which Walter has restored to it by this production of his. For all the tenderness and sorrow with which it is filled is aroused in me again as I think back on it; and the tragic humanness which it represents has, in my mind, much to say to our feelings of the present day. But if I am to tell anything at all about our drama this time, I must take account of my space.

The popular power which overshadows and threatens to stifle the theatre of the spoken word is the cinema. With the prodigality of a *parvenu*, it can attract the mimetic talent. It breaks up the *ensembles*. Indeed, art communities such as played Ibsen and Hauptmann twenty years ago in the Berlin Lessingtheater, or even such as I found as a young man in Munich when Possart developed his drastic virtuosity, his highly amusing art of speech, in the Hoftheater—such a stylistically fixed and disciplined body of players really no longer exists in Germany. Berlin, the leading theatrical city of Europe a quarter of a century ago, has suffered great losses; it is not only since Max Reinhardt retired to his castle near Salzburg that it has deteriorated in the attractiveness of its theatre. (I hear that you are receiving a visit from him in America. Oh, he will undoubtedly show you very remarkable things!) The Reinhardt-Theater! I do not forget how I first became acquainted with it. Gorki's *Night Lodging*, the comedies of Shakespeare, Schiller's *Die Räuber*! Those were rousing evenings, full of a charm which lost none of its intensity despite a certain intellectual, or shall we say artistic-moralistic, distrust which we brought to them; performances which dealt a radical blow to the Protestant temperance, the strenuous inwardness of Brahmsian naturalism with its poverty of

gesture—a blow of the theatre, a breaking through of the wild primitive spirit of comedy, and at the same time a new step in modernity, an irresistibly charming mixture of intellectualism and exaggeration, sensuality and wit. In short, the *most interesting* theatre which had ever existed; a theatre which one might say was executed on the basis of sheer virtuosity; and a theatre which benefited by appealing to the sense of criticism, since one could not help considering as an asset the intellectual pleasure derived from the exercise of the critical faculties. It has been fifteen or sixteen years since Reinhardt was a guest director for two or three summer seasons at the Munich Ausstellungspark. Corruption and decay, the degeneration into the sensational, developed rapidly under the scourge of Wilhelm's turbulent metropolis with its vulgar hunger for excitement. When, some years ago, Reinhardt handed over to his managers and dramaturgists the theatres which he had united under his authority, and withdrew into a private life interspersed with guest plays given abroad, he certainly did not do this through personal weariness, but because he had felt that his contribution to German culture had already been fulfilled.

What one sees to-day in the Berlin Deutsches Theater and the Grosses Schauspielhaus shows occasional remains of the old charm, but it lacks true intellectual scope. For in addition there is the fact that the theatre, in accordance with its adaptive, sympathetic nature, indicates most clearly the lowering of level which our public taste has undergone through war, revolution, and the emerging of new social classes. In the Grosses Schauspielhaus, where the audience sits in a space resembling an enormous cave of stalactites, and where there are accommodations for five thousand people, I recently saw a performance of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* which was worth thinking about in this connexion. I confess that I got but slight enjoyment. The talent and the personal appeal of some of the actors was estimable, but the spirit of the organization was thoroughly brutal. Their principal joke consisted in Petruchio's continually taking his wild little wife over his knee in front of the footlights, pulling up her skirts, and spanking her black and blue. This amused a public which is filling the seats now that our educated middle class is starving or has become proletarian. Indeed, after fifty years in Germany, one can no longer feel quite at home there. It has become a country to excite the curiosity, but very foreign.

In any case, in order to be able to discuss the condition of our theatre, one does not have to reside in the capital. The "provinces"—I place the word in quotation marks since there has never been a "province" in our culturally uncentralized country which corresponds to the bleak sense of the word in French—are not seldom to be taken more seriously in this respect than that gigantic market place in the North. This fact is also known to our dramatic authors, who are certainly not so keen as formerly on having their *premières* in Berlin, but often give preference to one of the smaller state or even city theatres. As to the South-German *Centrum*, as to Munich, it really never was, in the truest sense of the word, a theatrical city, any more than it was ever a literary city, or more accurately, any more than it was ever a city in which intellectual concerns could lay claim to any special domestic privileges. Yet is it an art city? Certainly; or essentially not so much a city of art as a city of the higher applied arts, of an art which is employed for festivity and is primarily decorative. The Munich type of artist is not the intellectual type; rather, he is a cheerful fellow of sensuous culture, with the instincts of a born arranger of feasts and carnivals. This trait, it will be objected, should be an asset to the art of the theatre in Munich. It is an asset. The Munich Künstler-theater stood for the most complete expression of everything which is meant here by dramatic art. The designer was absolute master in the house, the piece an opportunity to display a culture of applied arts, the actor a spot of colour. The scenic artist forbade the red-robed king in Hamlet from kneeling to make his prayer which never to heaven went. He had to stand upright, and precisely because the artist, as he declared, "needed the red vertical line." That is Munich. In *As You Like It*, Olivia, on whose very antipathy for the colour yellow the funniest scene of the play is based, wears a canary-yellow dress during the entire evening. This had suited the artist from the colouristic standpoint, and the good man had quite frankly not read the play. That is Munich.

It is not always so bad as that, but what really interests Munich in the theatre is neither the word nor the play, nothing intellectual, that is, but the incidental of the plastic arts. This is even true of our most literary theatre, the Kammerspiele which, under its artistic director Otto Falkenberg, is often able to captivate powerfully the theatre lover. I recently saw there a comedy by the lyric writer Josef von Eichendorff, *Die Freier*. The evening was stimulating

and highly Munichese. The piece is an amiable nothing made up of love, vagabondage, and the humour of disguise; but the scenery, which once again Emil Preetorius had undertaken, was rich in funny and delightful inventions. To be sure, on the last evening I spent in this theatre all the emphasis was laid on the literary, even the literarily historic. They gave part of Swinburne's Mary Stuart cycle, the Chastelard, and tormented themselves righteously with the hyper-aesthetic pre-Raphaelite style of poetry, in which the confused passion and psychology of chivalry acquired a somewhat aloof sympathy—but this will hardly grace the repertoire for long.

I love Munich too much to risk being the least misunderstood in my judgement of this city which was once so jolly, but which is now saddened by the general fate of Germany and is torn by political hatreds. The "spirit" which I spoke of as not being at home there is really the critico-literary spirit of European democracy which is represented in Germany chiefly by Judaism, although this movement hardly exists in Munich, and so far as it does it is exposed to a popular disfavour which on occasion takes the most drastic forms. Munich is the city of Hitler, the leader of the German *fascisti*; the city of the *Hakenkreuz*, this symbol of popular defiance and of an ethnic aristocracy the aspects of which are genuinely aristocratic and which above all lacks every connexion with the feudalism of Prussia before the war. Bavaria, and Munich in particular, was democratic long before there was any talk in Germany of "democracy" in the revolutionary sense. It was and is democratic in the national, racial sense of the word. That is to say, in its spirit of conservatism; and herein lies its opposition to the socialistic North, its anti-Semitism, its dynastic loyalty, its obstinacy in matters to do with the republic.

Generally speaking, our modern repertoire has undergone slight rejuvenation in recent years. Since Gerhart Hauptmann no new dramatic talent has appeared of sufficient vastness to captivate the nation. For a time Ibsen was completely crowded off the German stage by Strindberg; yet lately there have been signs of something like an Ibsen renaissance—which can be taken as an indication of restorative tendencies, of the longing for set forms. Wedekind is losing in popular interest. Shaw is still a favourite. It is to be regretted that Schnitzler's graceful, melancholy, and technically so perfect masterpieces are not demanded more often. The comedies of Hermann Bahr continue to please.

The new growth, the young school, what is called dramatic expressionism, has as a theory aroused a great deal of discussion or has discussed itself a great deal; from the standpoint of production it has been greatly disappointing. Still a few names from this sphere have gained an international reputation, although without having touched the heart of their own people. In foreign countries one knows of the social theatrics of Georg Kaiser, the penetrating satires of the *bourgeoisie* by Carl Sternheim, whose talent for comedies criticising his times is undeniable, but is absolutely without warmth. There is much more heart and feeling in Ernst Toller who, since he was a leader of the Munich communists of 1919, has been languishing for some years in a Bavarian prison. Yet unfortunately his artistry falls greatly short of his humanity; and his drama, *Die Maschinenstürmer*, which received demonstrative applause in Berlin, is a very weak imitation of *The Weavers*.

By a piece of daring—which one may, by the way, construe differently—Arnold Bronnen aroused tremendous respect from the youngest generation with his drama, *Vatermord* (Patricide) a crass and gloomy work which represents stylistically a kind of neo-naturalism, and in which all offences from incest through homosexuality to the dereliction mentioned in the title keep a solemn tryst. Similarly, there is much storming and stressing in the dramas of young Bert Brecht, whose first play, *Trommeln in der Nacht*, the bitter story of a soldier returning from the war, has two good acts, but then falls flat. Munich's state theatre, *Das Residenztheater*, felt called upon to accept his second play, *Dickicht*, although with all its ability it was inferior to the first from the standpoint of artistic discipline and intellectual fineness. The popular conservatism of Munich was on its guard. It will not stand for any Bolshevik art. At the second or third performance it entered protest, and this in the form of gas bombs. Frightful fumes suddenly filled the theatre. The public wept bitterly; yet not through emotion, but because the expanding gases had a strongly sympathetic effect on their tear ducts. The theatre had to be aired, and ushers appeared with ozone sprayers to purify the atmosphere. It was half an hour before the public could return to their seats in the parquet and the boxes in order to hear the piece to an end, although still crying from purely physical reasons. . . . That also is Munich. And with this cataclysm I shall close my present letter.

THOMAS MANN

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MEMOIRS OF MONSIEUR DE CHARLUS

LES PAS EFFACÉS. Mémoires de Robert de Montesquiou. Three Volumes. Emile-Paul. Paris. 25 francs.

ROBERT DE MONTESQUIOU, to whom *Le Secret de Tolède* was dedicated by Maurice Barrès in the words:

"AU COMTE ROBERT DE MONTESQUIOU

au Poète

à l'inventeur de tant d'objets et de figures rares,

à l'un des premiers apologistes du Greco,

et qui lui-même,

trouvera, quelque jour, son inventeur et son apologiste,

Hommage amical de son admirateur et voisin."

died two years ago. He was the author of some thirty books the value of which was in his opinion gravely underestimated by his contemporaries. Posterity, he was confident, would judge them at their true worth. Nothing is more probable. But if the poet is likely soon to be forgotten, the man, by a chance which does not befall many equally remarkable beings, seems bound for the immortality which his extravagant character deserves. A nobleman and an aesthete, his pride and insolence attained a fine excess which the most robust figures in Comedy have never surpassed. In spite of this it seemed that after his death oblivion must close upon him as upon so many another writer of minor verse, and patron of the arts. But his destiny brought him into touch with the only contemporary writer whose genius is comparable with that of Ben Jonson and Molière. Already as a young man Montesquiou had been, it was said, the original of des Esseintes in *A Rebours*. Certainly the book described many details in his apartment, but Huysmans founded the character of his hero, not so much on a personal knowi-

edge of Montesquiou (which he did not possess) as on his own idea of the complete aesthete. In Edmond Rostand's Chantecler, the Peacock, "*Le prince de l'adjectif inopiné*," was more directly inspired by the same model, but this is only a slight sketch and a caricature at that. Even his own recently published Memoirs in themselves give only an incomplete picture of the man, though they form a document as fascinating as would be the recollections of Volpone or the diary of Alceste. Montesquiou found, as Barrès prophesied, "*son inventeur et son apologiste*"; but by a pretty irony he will owe the immortality for which he so deeply cared, to a writer whose art he neither admired nor understood, Marcel Proust.

There was little of the eventful or publicly dramatic in the life of Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac. He was born in the year 1855 of one of the oldest and most noble Houses in France. There was hardly a Duchess with whom he did not call cousins, and the first volume of his Memoirs is entirely occupied with his ancestors: Montluc, a great soldier of the sixteenth century, d'Artagnan, whose life Dumas so scandalously garbled, the Maréchal de Montesquiou, whose rivalry with Villars over the victory of Denain fills some pages of Saint-Simon, and the Abbé de Montesquiou, the first patron, and perhaps even the father, of Théophile Gautier. Robert de Montesquiou's great-grandmother was the *gouvernante* at Schönbrunn of the Roi de Rome, his grandfather was a prolific writer of undistinguished verse, and his mother was a converted Protestant from the *petite noblesse* of Geneva. He gives delightful accounts of his old homes Courtenvaux and Charnizay, of the Abbé Papillon who was his childhood's tutor, of the domestics, and of his immediate family. Even when describing the closest of his relations he does not omit the touches of feminine malignity which are habitual to his pen. Of particular interest is the description he gives of his first cousin, who was known as "*Place à table*" owing to the importance he attached to the questions of precedence. It was he who, when told at a party which he was enjoying, that a near relation of his had just died, dismissed the inopportune news with the words "*On exagère.*" (Good Proustians will remember the Duc de Guermantes.) The chapter devoted to Montesquiou's schooldays he entitles *Mes Prisons*, and he applies to himself Stendhal's description of Julien Sorel, "*Il ne pouvait pas plaire—il était trop différent*," and Baudelaire's phrase, "*le plaisir aristocratique de dé-*

plaire." Like so many sensitive and unpopular schoolboys, he probably made a virtue of necessity; it was the intolerance of others which soon made him intolerable. And as one reads the endless story of his quarrels—there was hardly a friend or relation or even acquaintance, of whom he did not come to speak with venom and contempt—one begins to wonder what secret unhappiness or weakness lay hidden under this protective covering of insolence. "*Si vous aviez voulu,*" he was once told, "*tout le monde vous aimerait.*" "*Vous me faites peur!*" was his answer, sublime, and yet how pitiful! The truth is that he suffered all his life from the delusion that he was being persecuted.

As soon as he left school, he started to organize the existence that he led for nearly fifty years. From the first he deceived himself with regard to the value of the verse which he wrote with such assiduous accomplishment. It was never really more than a by-product of his activity. It gave him a certain literary status, it enabled him to turn graceful compliments for his friends, and afforded him a pretext for the feeling of self-satisfaction which it was the ruling passion of his life to gratify. But interior decoration was at least as important a method of self-expression. The descriptions in the memoirs of his early furnishing schemes make a document for the history of taste even more curious, and fearful, than Goncourt's *Maison d'un Artiste*. Pseudo-mediaeval lamps and Japanese objects from the Paris Exhibition jostled Morris wallpapers and rococo confessionals. It is possible that as he grew older his taste became less catholic. The two houses at Versailles in which he passed his later years apparently were charming: one was called *Le Pavillon des Muses*, and the other *Le Palais Rose*. When towards the end of his life he found he could no longer participate in the current artistic enthusiasms, he suddenly realized that for him life was over. He had once set the fashions in the aesthetic world, but an insurmountable barrier lay between the apostle of Gustave Moreau and Burne-Jones, and the appreciation of Picasso and of Negro Art. Seeing therefore that life had passed him by, he turned from the contemplation of his past to the possibilities of his future. And we have this Catholic aristocrat and aesthete finding comfort in a theological work translated from the English, *Dieu, l'Invisible Roi*, by H. G. Wells. It was characteristic of him to like the idea that God is not omnipotent: it placed Montesquiou himself in a less undignified position.

His literary career opened with a volume entitled *Les Chauves-Souris*, consisting of verses in the most precious manner of the Decadence, remarkable for the expression of a legitimist's contempt for the Empress Eugénie, and an aesthete's cult for Ludwig II, the mad King of Bavaria. His next book was *Les Hortensias Bleus*; thenceforward these flowers, hitherto little known, became an aesthetic symbol comparable to the green carnation. Another book of his verses was entirely consecrated to the memory of Gabriel d'Yturri, who lived with him for twenty years in an intimacy which no other friend could pretend to replace. *Le Chancelier de Fleurs*, as it was called, was read aloud by its author to a carefully selected "*compagnie de notables*" at one of the most elaborate and superb receptions that he ever organized. It has not yet been printed except privately, but Montesquiou thought it his most important work. Lastly he wrote three books of war-poems, of which the first, *Les Offrandes Blessées*, induced a newspaper to call him the Rupert Brooke of France. He was in his sixties when he wrote it.

Most of the famous literary and artistic personages of his time were known to Montesquiou. He says little of the Impressionists, but he was painted twice by Whistler (and once by Laszlo). *Leconte de Lisle*, *Mallarmé*, *Verlaine*, *Hérédia*, *Mirbeau*, *Bourget*, and *Barrès*—he knew them all, and quarrelled with most of them. He fought a duel with *Henri de Regnier*. He introduced *Duse* to *Bernhardt*, and *Ida Rubinstein* to *d'Annunzio*. He was famous for the fastuous magnificence of his many entertainments. Some distinguished author would be the guest of honour; the saloons would be decorated with symbolic flowers; the more aesthetic inhabitants of the *Faubourg*, and the more presentable celebrities of the literary world, would be invited; and *Réjane*, *Le Dargy*, or some other star from the *Comédie Française* would recite stanzas written by Montesquiou in honour of the guest, who then usually honoured their author with a grateful *accolade*. Living in a more informal age, and belonging to a more self-conscious race, one finds it difficult to estimate properly the effect of such deliberate pomps. One has to suppose that the guests, whose behaviour was severely regulated, enjoyed them. In any case, what matter? "*N'oublions pas*," Montesquiou writes, "*que je donnais ces fêtes à principe égoïste, moins pour satisfaire mes invités que pour me plaire à moi-même.*"

The *Faubourg St Germain* is a world apart. The minute particulars of etiquette which exercised the mind of Saint-Simon had in

his time their own concrete importance; precedence was related to power, and the privilege of *les grandes entrées*, for instance, carried with it the likelihood of material advantage. Access to the King's ear was by no means a vain thing, when the King still governed. The present Royalist society in France is the unsubstantial wraith of the *Ancien régime*: the divorce between rank and power is complete. A King without a Kingdom, a Court without a Government, and an Aristocracy without immunities—they continue to conduct themselves as if they controlled the destinies of France. The remoteness from actuality of the values on which this society is based lends it the mystery and charm of an oriental fairy-tale. And it was this fantastic element which fascinated Proust, and induced him to study, with the passion not of the snob, but of the entomologist, every fine shade and hierarchical distinction in this complicated survival of a vanished world. Of this society Robert de Montesquiou was a prominent member, and one of the most curious features of his life was the way he managed to regulate it by both the unreal values, which he retained from his noble birth, and the aesthetic values, which he acquire from his literary and artistic tastes. Indeed it was this double system of values which made possible his prodigious, his preposterous, his fascinating pride. The aesthete never knew an aristocrat whom he could not despise as a Philistine, the nobleman never met an artist whom he could not look down upon as a *roturier*. (The only contemporary Englishman who has enjoyed a similar situation appears to have been Lord Alfred Douglas.) Of all Montesquiou's contemporaries, d'Annunzio was the man he admired the most, and whose slights, real or imaginary, he would most easily forgive. A love of splendour, a boundless vanity, and a certain *cabotinage* were common to both their characters. Even so it is doubtful if the Frenchman ever forgot the obscurity of his idol's origins. "*Je vous aime, Montesquiou*," Anatole France said, "*parce que vous êtes fier*." Many readers of the Memoirs will be of the same sentiment. Pride so extravagant ceases to be fatuous: it becomes sublime and when the genius of Proust was inspired to immortalize it, there resulted a creation which can hold its own with the greatest characters in literature.

The Memoirs are disappointing in the meagreness of their references to Proust. They contain however a long note on the first two volumes of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, in which Mon-

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tesquiou calls the author (whom he knew intimately) a praiseworthy *arriviste*, and his book, "*un livre tatillonissime*," pushed into undue prominence by a conspiracy between Léon Daudet, Robert de Flers, and Reynaldo Hahn. The character inspired by himself he admits to be "*un personnage extrêmement bien peint*," and he promises to supplement these remarks with "*nouvelles observations fort curieuses*." Alas, this promise seems never to have been fulfilled. But the recent sale of his library included some two hundred letters from the correspondence between him and Proust. It is earnestly to be hoped that the purchaser can quickly publish them. There is evidence that Montesquiou exerted considerable influence upon Proust, particularly in the matter of style, by his conversation as well as by his writings. When reading the *Memoirs* one is continually reminded of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* by their preciousness and precision, and by the elaboration with which some particularly evasive sentiment is pursued in all its ramifications, and eventually defined with the help of the most unexpected comparisons. It must be impossible for those who did not personally know Montesquiou to decide how directly he was portrayed in Proust's book. The creator of the *Germantes* always maintained himself that his characters were composite. And in the volumes of his work which have so far appeared, there is little reference to Montesquiou's literary and artistic activities. But no one who has read his Proust properly can look at the *Memoirs* without realizing that in essentials the portrait in the novel is a masterpiece of resemblance as well as of art. As a sample, here is Montesquiou's description of a young pianist who had set to music some of his verses:

"*Cette première rencontre appréciable de ma poésie avec son adaptation musicale m'avait causé assez de surprise, et je l'avoue, d'agrément, pour me donner le désir d'exalter celui à qui je les devais. J'allai le voir, dans un appartement assez bas, mais assez vaste, du quartier d'Antin, assez obscur et triste aussi, garni de meubles quelconques, parmi lesquels l'immense Erard apparaissait comme un dolmen de palissandre, teint du sang luisant et noirci des victimes du concert payant. D'une telle emprise, exclusivement exercée sur deux existences, disons-le, dignes et pures, par un meuble sonore, je ressentis alors plus ou moins nettement ce qu'elle offrait de noble, sous forme de conviction, de devoir accompli, de dévoue-*

ment à une profession et à un art; mais aujourd'hui je le sens mieux encore. Une veuve honorable, hypnotisée par la valeur réelle d'un fils unique, sur un point précis, et de cet enfant, l'offrande de sa vie à la culture de son don particulier, puis, de tous deux, la résolution de sacrifier à l'exercice tyrannique d'une carrière aussi exigeante qu'une religion, et requérant comme celle-ci, l'abandon des plaisirs, sous peine de vengeance cuisante par diminution consentie, cela me paraît toujours quelque chose de respectable, digne de susciter les sentiments dont je lui fis la faveur. . . . Le pianiste se montra reconnaissant de ce que j'avais fait pour le mettre en lumière, mais reconnaissant avec toute la sécheresse qu'il ne mettait pas dans l'exécution de ses morceaux. Il fit partie de mon existence, au cours des années qui suivirent. Je lui disais, bien entendu, sous couleur le plaisanterie: 'Tâchez que mon amour pour votre art l'emporte sur mon horreur pour votre personne!' mais, au fond, c'était vrai, et le contraire eut lieu. Je décidai de ne plus le voir, ce qui m'était agréable, mais forcément aussi de plus l'écouter, ce qui ne l'était point."

Is not this the voice of Monsieur de Charlus in all its power and luxuriance?

Looking back upon his life, Montesquiou found only one thing to regret: he had never travelled further west than the Escorial or further east than Capri. For the rest, he had culled everything exquisite that life had to offer him. He had been for nearly fifty years a prominent figure in Paris society: he had lived in charming houses, decorated them with passionate care, and entertained in them with appropriate magnificence the contemporaries he most admired: he had revealed to the world a new flower, the hydrangea, and a new poet, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore: he had written thirteen books of verse, and seventeen of prose: he had executed some two hundred drawings in water-colour: he had offered the homage of a violent adoration to things of beauty, and often he had been able to acquire the things that he adored. That he had loved persons as well as things, and with the same possessive egoism, we cannot doubt. But in this matter his memoirs are uninformative. In his youth he invented the maxim: "*il n'y a de supportable que les choses excessives.*" In every respect he lived up to it.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

WALDO FRANK'S HOLIDAY

HOLIDAY. By *Waldo Frank*. 12mo. 233 pages. Boni and Liveright. \$2.

THOUGH southern materials make up the body of this novel, the primary approach to it should not be sectional. Rather, one should come to it through the artistic personality of Waldo Frank. This attitude is natural to those who have experienced the author's *Rahab* and *City Block*. For these works frankly eschew geographical and naturalistic fidelity in favour of a reality more individual and more essentialized. In like manner, *Holiday* is first of all a subjective design; it has utilized certain elements of the South because these seemed most suited to its purposes. Hence whatever local or racial truth or untruth the work may contain, must be considered as a purely secondary factor.

The design is stark and clear enough. It is concerned with repression and release, with repression and expression, as consequent and contrasting realities of human life. But the design, as achieved in novelistic form, is dynamic. Therefore it manipulates the effects and frictions of these realities to create its movement and its climaxes.

Frank is too subtle for an arbitrary portioning of repression, in a block, to the whites of the South; for a rigid symbolizing of the blacks as expression. He sees the Negro as free within a very strict oppression. He sees the white—half, respectably restricted, half, frankly-hypocritically loose—compressed by an equally strict freedom. Each race then, within itself, contains the contrasting elements. And he knows that the Negro often serves as outlet for the pent energies of the dominant race. In contrast with each other, however, it may be said that in this novel the blacks generally represent a full life; while the whites stand for a denial of it. The black church, the white church; niggertown, whitetown, are similarly opposed. This opposition gets its statement in the opening passage: "Sunset at Nazareth. Niggers go home through the copper-glow of pines. Niggers sing home. White men stand lean in the doors of paintless houses. White men stand still." And by

means of swift chapter juxtapositions, and the Frankian crystallizations of unspoken consciousness, it is sustained throughout the book.

For the purpose of a novel, and likewise in order that Frank's intentions be completely realized, it was necessary that two bodies, a white and a black, be set in movement, through the contrasting states, towards each other. Virginia Hade and John Cloud, vehicles for a need conscious beyond the local taboos placed upon sex and race, move towards each other. Away from Nazareth, where nature is still innocent of the divisions that spring to life with exploitation, they meet. For the first moments their contact is as clean as nature is. And then the inevitable differences and discords assert themselves. Having exchanged knives with her, the black man suddenly recalls, "*I am John Cloud. Nigger.*" Whereupon he straightway leaves her. She, pressing his knife into her waist, cuts herself. The wound is a mere body-outlet. Deeper release has been denied. Conscious that her own world is the real cause of her frustration, she nevertheless fastens upon John as the immediate instrument of it. And, impelled by a force, clearly greater than volition, with John's knife still in her hand, and blood upon her, she marches into the town square. White Nazareth is just coming from a revival which has whipped it to within an inch of release. Full release, not quite. It sees Virginia, Cloud's knife, and it immediately knows that a lynching will fulfil what the revival failed in. "*—Upon the black branch of the black tree let there be Fruit! Let there be seed, let there be fruit for my passion!*" It forthwith gets John Cloud and hangs him. "Nazareth beneath him peers with grimed eyes through the murk of its spent lust." Virginia, comfortable in bed, makes no effort to avert the tragedy she senses taking place, for, "*—Who made this wound? My hand. Yet it is your wound, John.*" Here, then, the design and motor-plot of *Holiday*.

They are executed with a precision, an economy, a swiftness, and a sense of form that spell artistic mastery. Generally, the aesthetic employed is that so accurately analysed by Gorham B. Munson in his *Waldo Frank: a Study*. The Frankian aesthetic of mobility "*. . . accomplished first of all by the abundant use of very active verbs . . . generated by his shrewd calculation of overstatements, by his thrusting and expanding figures of speech . . . worked up by lyrical crystallizations, by swift dramatic*

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presentation, by the alternating structure of the Whole"—adapted to the given materials. In this review I shall concentrate upon Frank's use of the unspoken consciousness, for in *Holiday*, more

than in any previous work, this is a major element of his aesthetic.

Considered as a structural mechanism, it provides the condensation, swiftness, and dramatic contrasts essential to such a design as *Holiday*. The psychology of a repressed people, seeking release in a revival tent, is given in seven lines, the last of which reads, "Come, preacher, lash us! Make us leap!" Virginia Hade's consciousness is unfolded in seven lyric pages. And whitetown and niggertown, taken as entities, are vividly opposed in the same number. I quote from this section:

"How can I rest in you when you stand and shout? I am weary with whiteness. To rule, to be civilized and chaste; you do not know what weariness it is. My woman yearns towards me in hunger, I am spent. All the world waves in darkling circles about my white uprightness, I am spent. I must lean down on you, earth, lie in you. O you are warmth and power, I am spent. Your pools draw my blood: your red soils blanch me dry. I must lie in you! But you who are my earth stand up and shout! How can I rest in you? How can I shut my eyes?

—*Leave me alone . . .*
Don' you see we is lovin'?
Leave me alone . . .
Don' tell me nothin',
How kin I listen to you
When mah love's lips
When mah love's arms
When de soft breast ob mah love
Closes roun' me like de earth
. . . all laughin' flowers
Comes roun' me like de air
. . . all smilin' breeze."

As functions of the larger organism, these crystallizations are effective and admirable.

Considered in relation to specific characters, they operate fan-wise. By their means, the figures expand to an awareness which

otherwise would be impossible to them. Because this extra-awareness raises the conscious level of the book, because it contributes to Frank's general intention, it is justified. It nevertheless forces one to accept the characters as essentially Frankian in origin. There is no valid artistic reason why an author should not project portions of himself into his characters. In fact there is a very definite artistic reason why he should. For this is the method of great creation. But he should be fully determined in this position. And no trace of an incongruent mode should be allowed to infringe it. The figures, of whatever origin, should stand consonant and fused. In *Holiday*, here and there are to be found breaks in texture, of the dialogue, of the dialogue compared to the unspoken consciousness, that make one question Frank's clarity, during the process of composition, on this point. For example, take these lines attributed to John Cloud:

"Ol' woman—yo' getting lazy, yo' gettin' fat! Yo' cookin's too good. Mammy, soon I'll have to h'ist you." . . .

"—It is your skin!"

—Your love's a white sun shinin' on a sea.

Summer blue sea

Summer blue sky

. . . Da's your love!

It is your skin!"

"—I love you, mother. But it is your fault. You made me."

"—An' I care fo' you. An' in my love fo' you, why is there blame?"

I do not of course refer to any superficial difference in the language used, in the use of dialect. I refer to a psychological break, a too obvious duality of origin which suspends one between the desire to accept Cloud as a southern Negro, and the desire to accept him as a character created by Frank for the specific purposes of his design. This break is the one serious interior defect that I find in *Holiday*. It does not, however, impair the structural finish of this novel. Technically, it is solid and tight. And as an art form it is clean, superb. *Holiday* therefore sustains Waldo Frank's high achievement as a literary artist.

JEAN TOOMER

LATE VIOLETS FROM THE NINETIES

THE BLIND BOW-BOY. *By Carl Van Vechten. 12mo. 261 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.*

THE FLOWER BENEATH THE FOOT. *By Ronald Firbank. 12mo. 224 pages. Grant Richards. London.*

MR VAN VECHTEN, in *The Blind Bow-Boy*, has tried his hand at a kind of burlesque fiction which we have all too little of in America: the satiric iridescent novel of the type of *Zuleika Dobson* and *La Révolte des Anges*; and, though he is at times a little less fantastic and less surprising than one could wish, he gets away with it, on the whole, very well. You must remember that he has had the hardihood to go to New York for his rococo Satyricon; and you may judge if New York is recalcitrant. The result is, I think, in spite of all the green orchids and the rose-jade cysts for cosmetics which Mr Van Vechten finds in East 19th Street, a little closer to the prosaic reality—or rather to the reality of ordinary fiction—than Mr Van Vechten probably intended. Harold's marriage with Alice Blake, the rich, boring, well-bred New York girl, might almost have come out of Mrs Wharton; it is rather the figure of Campaspe Lorillard who reaches the stature of high comic creation, and I am inclined to think the book should have been about her and not about Harold. Campaspe craves no other activity than the luxurious enjoyment of her mind, the play of an exquisite taste, and the exercise of a ruthless intelligence; she snubs her husband with a regal kindness, yet declines any other attachment, and sees as little of her children as possible, thereby trebling their interest in her. The only member of her family who interests her is her mother, whom she always calls by her first name. She is Mr Van Vechten's most successful achievement.

Of course, it is not in comparison with American books that I accuse Mr Van Vechten of being prosaic. Beside Floyd Dell and Willa Cather, he is Ariel, Till Eulenspiegel. But I have been reading *The Flower Beneath the Foot* by Mr Ronald Firbank, an author whom Mr Van Vechten enormously admires and with whom

I am sure he will not think it inappropriate to compare him; and I am struck by how much further Mr Firbank has got beyond the commonplace world of commonplace serious fiction than even Mr Van Vechten. With the first pages of *The Flower Beneath the Foot* one is closed about by a new and vivid world, and a world so complete in itself that, in all its artificiality and absurdity, one feels sure it must exist somewhere: you stand in the high-windowed rooms of the Winter Palace of Pisuerga; silk swishes and gossip tinkles; the Queen lounges in a *chaise longue*; a maid of honour, looking out from a window fringed with green-veined bougainvilleas, dreams of marrying Prince Yousef, as she watches the clouds slowly speeding above the town like great knots of pink roses; all about one feels the rustle of the court and the glitter of diplomatic dinners, where the very hangings seem to be alive with an exquisite insatiable sensuality which, beneath fashion and official functions, provides one of the only incitements to activity, though even it is a little phantasmal, a little fragile. I have heard Mr Firbank called trivial and in one of his phases he is, but he is certainly far more serious as an artist than he is commonly credited with being. He can create an extraordinarily strong impression—about trivial matters, if you like—with extraordinarily few words; and it is not merely a question of suggesting the improper so inobviously and so lightly that it is almost impossible to put your finger on the phrase where the indecent idea was raised; he is also able to make exquisitely selected details tell for effects of a certain aesthetic intensity—as when Laura watches the royal wedding of her lover from the spike-fringed walls of the convent.

Both these books represent the last survival of the spirit of the *fin de siècle*: despite their occasional dalliyings with the movies and other features of the twentieth century, they belong essentially to the Yellow Book era. But it is curious to contemplate the change which has come over the decadence since the hey-day of Beardsley and Wilde. The school which began with Baudelaire and is now dissolving with Arthur Symons derived its prime vitality and force from its extreme conviction of sin. The decadents talked much about "paganism," but their point of view was anything but pagan: it was a reaction against Victorian Christianity by people who were still Victorians and Christians. The fascination with which they succeeded in investing certain pleasures and ideas was directly dependent on the extent to which they could make you be-

lieve that they were sinister; they wanted you to be afraid of sin, as sin—that is, as something to be detested—and at the same time to celebrate it as something to be desired—an impossible moral position, sure to involve insincerity on one side or the other. How can you believe that sin is “the good” and at the same time believe it to be sin? From the point of view of the person who really believes in the sinfulness of the flesh and of the uncensored exercise of the intelligence, they are things to be sedulously shunned; from the point of view of the real pagan they do not become an issue at all. But Baudelaire had to pretend to believe in the Devil and at the same time spend his whole artistic life endeavouring to make the Devil attractive; and his successors followed his example.

This is why, I believe, the writers of the end of the century seem inevitably to be diminishing in stature. Who can read *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *A Rebours*, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, or Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* with the same enthusiasm as their contemporaries? The whole effectiveness of the things narrated depends upon one's being shocked by them and when the prejudices to be shocked have been removed the works of art are no longer exciting. I can think of only two writers of that period and school who escaped the moral confusion of the reaction against respectability: Beardsley and Verlaine. Beardsley did, to be sure, in his drawings, exploit the fascination of Evil, as evil; but he also wrote rather a remarkable unfinished romance called *Venus and Tannhauser* in which he does succeed in investing a sort of pagan world with the artificial graces of the 'nineties without allowing it to become darkened and tragic with the fumes of a burning orthodoxy; his *Venus*, unlike the *Venus* of Swinburne or the *Harlot* of Oscar Wilde, is not destructive and terrible, but girlish and agreeable. The orgies, the perversities, and the grotesqueries of her court are to her all natural and harmless; she approaches really much nearer the *naïf* corruption of the comedies and tales of the eighteenth century than anything to be found in Wilde. As for Verlaine, he vacillated unquestionably between “paganism” and piety; but, unlike Baudelaire, he did not try to be pagan and pious at the same time; when he was a faun he was completely a faun without any respectable compunctions. And in these moods he created a neo-eighteenth century erotic sceptical world rather like the world of *Venus and Tannhauser*.

Now Mr Van Vechten and Mr Firbank are also able to take their

heresies and pleasures easily. It may be that Mr Firbank has gone to school to Beardsley. But the real reason why they are not worried and feverish, as their predecessors were, is probably because the time has gone by when it is possible to get into that state. The generation of Beardsley and Wilde had been brought up on Ruskin and Tennyson; but the generation of Firbank and Van Vechten has been brought up on Beardsley and Wilde and their prejudices were destroyed early. The conviction of sin has been removed and it is possible for the corrupt to be amiable again. Their *genre* may be destined to grow dimmer and dimmer, but it at least fades away with a smile. In the meantime, as those qualities are growing rarer, let us enjoy their urbanity and taste.

EDMUND WILSON

THE SQUIRE IN POLITICS

THE LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT. By A. G. Gardiner. 2 volumes. 8vo. 1276 pages. George H. Doran Company. \$12.

IN a copy of *Punch* just after the resignation of Mr Gladstone in 1895, there appeared a cartoon representing Lord Rosebery mounted and armed cap-à-pie, with Sir William Vernon Harcourt on foot, as his squire. Did the cartoonist see in this strangely assorted pair the revival of the immortal association of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza? Did he in fact see the squire merely changing his service from one Quixote to another? While Sir William Harcourt was remote enough in character from Sancho Panza, he shared with him one trait—that of practical common sense. The essence of Cervantes' comedy was in the association of the dreamer and the realist; and this element gave the touch of comic relief to English politics during Sir William Harcourt's long service under two Quixotes. After the adventure with the carriers Sancho remarks to his master:

"Sir, seeing these disgraces are of the essence of knighthood, I pray you whether they succeed very often, or whether they have certain times limited wherein they befall? For methinks, within two adventures more, we shall wholly remain disenabled for the third, if the gods in mercy do not succour us."

This was the burden of Sir William Harcourt's complaint, expressed with a wit which brightened the House of Commons during so many dull debates, a wit which consisted in touching with precision the discrepancy between the pretensions and the realities, between grandiose conceptions and the means of carrying them out.

William Harcourt entered the House of Commons, after a notable career at the bar, in the election of 1868, which resulted in Gladstone's liberal government. He remained aloof from the ministry in many of its reforming enterprises, though in 1873 he entered the Cabinet as Solicitor General. This elevation called by

precedent for knighting, to which proceeding Harcourt strenuously objected. When Gladstone told him that it was necessary to keep up the prestige of the order of knights he replied: "Then you should take a knighthood yourself." During the Tory administration of 1874-1880, with its Russian-Turkish imbroglio, he was out of sympathy alike with Gladstone's idealistic humanitarianism and Disraeli's romantic imperialism. "Gladstone and Dizzy seem to cap one another in folly," he wrote, "and I don't know which has made the greater ass of himself." In 1880 he joined Mr Gladstone's second administration as Home Secretary. In the subsequent Liberal governments he invariably appeared as Chancellor of the Exchequer, a position which gave him unmeasured scope for the exercise of his realistic habit of mind in dealing with his colleagues of the spending departments. In these years he drew much nearer to his chief in the long struggle for Home Rule, which ended in defeat by the House of Lords. We forget the figure of Sancho Panza and remember instead the chivalric bearing of The Loyal Servitor. Nor was this the only relation in which Harcourt's loyalty showed as his supreme quality. Although a leading candidate for the succession to Gladstone, he made extraordinary efforts to retain within the party men like Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Hartington who would have been his leading competitors; and on Gladstone's retirement in 1895 he consented to the selection of Lord Rosebery as Premier, and served under him as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. It gratifies the sense of sportsmanship, so large an element in British politics, that in these years of declining Liberal power and the following ones of Tory rule, when the Liberal party seemed hopelessly distracted, Sir William Harcourt should have reached the height of his career, and a position in the House of Commons equal to that held by any statesman of the nineteenth century, from Canning to Gladstone.

Sir William Harcourt was the descendant of a family, like the Cecils, Cavendishes, and Stanleys, long distinguished in the English oligarchy. It was always a matter of surprise to find him on the liberal side, steadily inclining toward radicalism. The reason for this attitude is to be found in his uncompromising realism, his inveterate habit of seeing things as they are. He has been called a man of the Eighteenth Century, but it was the matter-of-fact, positive school of the beginning of the century to which he belonged,

not that of the revolutionary doctrinaires of its close. He confessed once to wishing that he had been a member of the cabinet of Sir Robert Walpole; and later in a letter to Morley, he wrote of that minister, "It is all nonsense about his corruption. He paid the fools to do what the wise men told them—a very good bargain." This is not a defence of corrupt practices—merely a recognition of the fact that it was the way to govern England in the Eighteenth Century. Practical rather than ideal considerations constantly swayed him. It may be doubted if he had much feeling for the abstract justice of Ireland's claim to freedom. "While you have a hostile Ireland you can never have a friendly America," was sufficient wisdom for him. His tendency to fall back on the legalistic position was part of his belief in law as the codified common sense of the ages. And his interpretation of law was steadily on the side of the people whom laws were made to protect. For instance, he brushed aside all the dunderheaded rubbish about interference with the liberty of making contracts. "A cabman is not allowed to make what bargain he likes for the conveyance of a passenger. The law is full of such examples, founded on the principle that when one party has what amounts to a monopoly giving to him an overwhelming advantage in the bargain the power of contracting on the other side is not really free." Although Harcourt was thinking of the relation between landlord and tenant, it is obvious that his reasoning applies equally to that of employer and worker. His practical grasp of things as they are, frequently led him to a position which we should describe as idealism. Take, for example, his view of the outlawry of war, given in 1869.

"I believe that the idea of reducing war to a military and naval duel between armies and fleets is as chimerical and less humane than the romantic project of chivalry to settle the fate of Moslem and Christian by a single combat between Saladin and Richard. These two nations are locked in the deadly embrace of war whether they be fighting for empire or struggling for independence. They will deal the fatal blow with every weapon which fortune places within their grasp. Passion is deaf, patriotism is unscrupulous, fear is cruel. To attempt to disarm war of its horrors is an idle dream and a dangerous delusion; let us labour at the more practical task of making it impossible."

To say that Mr Gardiner's *Life* is worthy of its subject is saying much, but not too much. These vast monumental biographies to the Victorian dead have been frequently done in the spirit and manner of mortuary sculpture, heroic size. Mr Gardiner is understood to envisage his task under the more humble figure of the embalmer. We can be sure that Sir William Harcourt under Mr Gardiner's hands is "very like." Mr Gardiner is of the modern school of biography, and his realistic method finds an appropriate subject in Sir William Harcourt. Nothing could be farther from the conventional steel engraving of the statesman than Mr Gardiner's succession of photographs. He has constantly caught Harcourt as he always was—humanly natural in his temper, his appetite, his affection, his humour. It goes without saying that a biography which does justice to this last aspect of Sir William's character cannot be a dry book. A reviewer might satisfy his readers merely by quoting the unexpected twists of Harcourt's mind and the happy turns of his phrase. One of Harcourt's unpleasant duties as Home Secretary was to act as jailer for devoted clergymen under sentence for ritualism, and devoted Irishmen imprisoned for patriotism. It was a bad situation, but Harcourt, seeking to find an excuse for releasing them on the ground of ill-health, wrote an excruciatingly funny letter to Gladstone, lamenting that they would grow so fat. In a speech on Lord Salisbury's foreign policy he played a delightful variation on Bismarck's description of that statesman as a man of lath painted to look like iron. "It is all very well," said Harcourt, "to come in like a lion; but if you have to go out like a lamb it is better not to come in like a lion. You will ultimately get more credit in your capacity as a lamb if you have not begun the operation by roaring and lashing your tail."

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

LUST AND HATE

THE LEFT LEG. By T. F. Powys. 12mo. 311 pages.
Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

SEVERAL years ago Mr T. F. Powys bade a peremptory farewell to the complex artifices of modern culture, and retired to the country to save his soul. The first fruit of his rustication was a small and mediocre tract called *Soliloquies of a Hermit*. When that book was written Mr Powys was painfully conscious of his isolation, and the very humility which he practised so diligently testified to the superior contentment of a man who at last was released from the intellectual enigmas of the world. He was glad to get close to the earth, to apostrophize crumbling fences and the waning moon; he was thoroughly sick of the recondite formulas of literature and the barren inhumanities of art—he would look deeply within the hearts of yokels for the secrets of salvation. "It is terrible," he wrote, "to think that the evil smell of modern oil has got to me, and that the vile working-devils would try to pump petrol into my soul." Somewhat in the manner of Papini he began to re-read the gospels, but unlike the Italian bigot, he neither inflated nor capitalized his Christian spirit. But his book was a failure—prolix adaptations from the New Testament, and the simple joys of "youths and maidens sporting on the village green." Apparently Mr Powys was only another defeated young man who had discovered in his retirement that he had nothing to say.

The *Left Leg*, however, has justified the author's seclusion. It is a much better book than the ridiculous title would indicate; in fact, a work of uncommon beauty, decidedly different from *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, and possessed of many of the qualities of fine fiction. Mr Powys is no longer the preacher—a more intimate acquaintance with the Dorset villagers has robbed him of his faith; and though he has failed to save his soul, he has taken the raw materials of rural life and shaped them into literary forms, and that, in itself, is one kind of salvation. There is no love in these three stories: the author hates his characters, and the characters hate one another; the book is a shrewd and contemptuous study of the

avarice, stupidity, fatalistic lethargy, and bestial obsessions of an ugly peasantry.

The title-story is easily the best. In this narrative Mr Powys gives us a representative and convincing gallery of rustics: the apathetic clergyman; the idiot; the amorous, accessible widow; the praying visionary and his innocent daughter; and the terrible landlord. Farmer Mew, the landed despot, covets the earth, and with silent, iron hand, reduces his tenants to slavery and rapes the visionary's daughter. The scene in which Mr Mew gains full ownership of Mary Gillet is extraordinarily effective; there is no elaborate preparation, no moonlight and dreamy fatigue and long rides, as in the case of Hardy's *Tess*—it is a sententious description of a cruel and deliberate act of animal mastery. Mr Powys is singularly successful in his handling of sexual matters; the stolid repressions of the Dorset folk are cleverly hinted at, and then suddenly divulged with swift and unexpected fierceness. It is a relief to find a writer who appreciates the significance of sex, and is not afraid to discuss the subject honestly; and yet, at the same time, one who is free from the pathological nastiness of the Freudian school. As a sustained piece of fiction *The Left Leg* is severely crippled by the preposterous Mr Jar. We are given to understand in the opening paragraph that if this shadowy saint should ever turn up, something would happen. Finally, at the last minute, he does appear, and the story collapses: Farmer Mew, in an inconsistent fit of remorse, blows himself to pieces, and Mr Jar leads the pregnant lass into a strange new land. The second story has to do with a schoolmistress who goes into the country to escape the church bells and rats and smells of her native town, and of the tailor lover who follows her—the tailor dies, and the girl returns to the rats and smells. "God had sent her into the sunshine. But was there any sunshine? Surely not." The third story tells of young Luke Bird and the great religious light that strikes him. Luke chucks his job at the brewery, forgets his Winnie, and wanders into the peaceful vales to preach the gospel. But the villagers are as immovable as clods, and Luke finds it expedient to fall in love again. In the end Rose is coarsely possessed in Luke's presence by the Squire; and the young Bird takes the winding road which leads back to the brewery and to Winnie.

Mr Powys has yet to learn the principles of solid construction.

The main objection to his work is its fundamental lack of coherent action. For the most part all is clear and definite; but when we might reasonably expect a dramatic culmination of some sort, the narrative becomes tenuous and unimportant, and at length dissolves into vapid fancies resembling the oddities of Mr James Stephens in his less serious moods. The fault is largely the result of an incongruous mixture of genuine realism and whimsicality—the author is unable to control his imagination, and when pressed for a solution drops into unseemly mannerisms—short sentences, illegitimate surprises, and childish personifications. With a little alteration the three stories might be woven into a satisfactory novel; but the book as it stands is immeasurably better than the unreadable crop of pot-boilers. Mr Powys is neither a windy romancer nor a reporter of actualities; in his spiritual groping he has felt deeply and hated bitterly; he has thrown a scorching light on the stingy souls of the Dorset villagers, and has produced a shocking book—shocking, that is, in the aesthetic sense.

THOMAS CRAVEN

BRIEFER MENTION

THE HORSES OF DIOMEDES, by Remy de Gourmont, translated by C. Sartoris (12mo, 249 pages; Luce: \$2). De Gourmont gives his ideas the outlines of women, and offers them the caresses of Diomedes, Pascase, and Cyran. Sophistication at its summit becomes a lucid naïveté. He builds a sad Utopia wherein his mind blossoms in the restless colours of flesh. In an immortal garden besieged by decay, Diomedes moves idly between Pascase, his youth—acolyte yet alien, subtle but young—and Cyran, his age—a tempting destination barely evaded; aesthete turning ascetic as his hair whitens. Thus de Gourmont amuses himself with ghosts whose flesh is still capable of embraces; and indulges the hesitations of his spirit among amours that are exquisite, yet cannot relinquish their imperfections. He woos thought like an ironical lover who knows how to make a banal whisper profound. Having evaded both the violence and the ennui of his time, his imagination waits where only the monosyllable of the mystic is adequate; his murmurings are one step from silence. Thought glides elusively complete as all living things in the transparent pool of his style; a moonlight style in which shapes are distinct yet pliant.

THE VICTIM, AND THE WORM, by Phyllis Bottome (16mo, 292 pages; Doran: \$1.75) are two novels in one volume, each aptly described by its title. The Victim is an American millionaire who has decided to pass the last of his life in England as being the most peaceful place he can find. His beautiful daughter interrupts this dream, and, presenting a front of martyrdom to the world, manages to inflict suffering upon everyone about her, until her father sacrifices his happiness to save others from being her victims. It is vividly told, readable, and unimportant. The second story is rather more complex, and with better relief. Two people, a man and a young girl, adore a clever, domineering woman who shapes their lives for them, until, almost unconsciously, they find themselves defying her in small ways, and finally allying themselves for life against her. Phyllis Bottome is distinctly the "popular appeal" writer, but here and there, one comes upon evidences that she could write a better novel, even a realistic one, if she so desired.

ELIMUS: A STORY, by B. C. Windeler, with twelve designs by D. Shakespear (16mo, 45 pages; Three Mountains Press: \$3.50) depicts without mercy the collapse of a weak illusioned youth in a tough expletive pioneer world. The psychology of Elimus Hackett is established directly, without comment, in a few brief actions. He exists primarily as part of a firm design, as a topic for solid chunky vigorous prose. The omission of articles, the employment of compounded words, the skilled use of alliteration speed up the text which runs with an emphatic accent like that of an unmuffled motor exhaust. Elimus is a proof that Joyce and Lewis have revived the language. In addition, the force of the prose is well translated in the black-and-whites of D. Shakespear.

THE FLORENTINE DAGGER, by Ben Hecht (12mo, 365 pages; Boni & Live-right: \$2). "Melodrama," someone has said, "may be a drunken plausibility," but it is hardly that in Hecht's new book. He has raided the roadhouse of popularity with the dexterity of a mutilated poet. Across the cadaver of a Broadway mystery story he flings the violent costume in which he dances best—and the effect is an accurate and illuminating portrait of Hecht. His glittering manikins are fantastically wilting tinsel, cinema apparitions that collapse with the turning of each page. The book is a *danse macabre* of Hecht's literary ambitions.

GREY TOWERS, anonymous (12mo, 286 pages; Covici-McGee: \$2) might be characterized as the small boy's pea-shooter in the act of being matriculated in one of our larger universities. It demonstrates, with a great deal of ardour and some effectiveness, that universities are controlled by human beings whose weaknesses are not altogether academic. This has long been suspected, and doubtless will continue to be the case much after Grey Towers is out of print.

MODERN SWEDISH MASTERPIECES, selected and translated by Charles Wharton Stork (12mo, 257 pages; Dutton: \$2.50). What technical discoveries are offered? Has this particular mode of expression been driven further? What contributions to noumenal knowledge have been made? These are the likeliest questions an Anglo-Saxon, grounded in his own culture and familiar with general European literature, would raise when reading an anthology of Swedish short stories. The stories of Söderberg, Heidenstam, Siwertz, and Hallström indicate a literature of normal vitality and controlled execution, but produce no fresh conquests. Simple ironic tales, historical or costume chapters, "sophisticate" dialogue, and allegories are all done acceptably by them. Unfortunately, Mr Stork's ability to recognize masterpieces is, judged by his conduct in American literary life, somewhat open to question. Consequently, one's curiosity as to significant activity in contemporary Swedish letters remains unsatisfied.

CHILDREN OF MEN, by Eden Phillpotts (8vo, 471 pages; Macmillan: \$2.50) and BLACK, WHITE AND BRINDLED by Eden Phillpotts (8vo, 344 pages; Macmillan: \$2). The first of these books ends the author's series of Dartmoor tales. He draws here so largely upon Hardy and even upon George Eliot that one has the feeling of having traversed his ground before in greater company. The situations are well handled, and the backgrounds convincing. The English countryside, however, seems to be as unpleasantly populated as the English town in Gilbert Cannan. The second book, Black, White, and Brindled, presents a series of short stories entirely different in character and with a setting as exotic as the earlier one was dull. The dazzling white and blue of the West Indies, the atmosphere of negro laziness and sudden, mysterious crime, come as a surprise—even a pleasant surprise—after the grey inevitableness of Children of Men. The tragedy in the first is a creeping palsy which claims its victims and leaves no hope. In the second book, tragedy is only a way station, an obstacle, beyond which the heroes of the various stories find their way to peace and some degree of happiness at last.

FOX FOOTPRINTS, by Elizabeth J. Coatsworth (12mo, 79 pages; Knopf: \$1.50) is a Cook's tour of the East, with halts in Siam, India, Tahiti, and a stop-over of two months in China and Japan. Decoration, quaintness, exoticism, images. The moon over the tropics is a white curved bud, whereas the moon over Japan is compared aptly to a butterfly. There is no property more stage-worn than the moon, and the dents of time persist even when its cardboard disc has been painted over with all the nice colours of Miss Coatsworth's lunar and exotic vocabulary.

CHARLATAN, by Louis Grudin (12mo, 62 pages; Lieber & Lewis: \$1.50) contains niceties of craftsmanship at the service, mostly, of fancy and fantasy. Mr Grudin concentrates, not upon the direct conveyance of an emotion, but upon the construction of a decorative, unexpected, and distorting armour to encase his feelings, or rather he sews together "his good fur coat of despair." We recognize the coat, but the despair is imperceptible: he gets the armour, but fails to establish the emotions. Irony, the grim disparity between a strong desire and its miscarriage in deed, cannot grow from a bare assumption of the desire and an embroidery of the deed. Mr Grudin, however, has more restraint than Bodenheim, his chief influence, and a poem like *Diary* shows a trend away from the rhetoric of sheer ingenuity.

APRIL TWILIGHTS, by Willa Cather (8vo, 66 pages; Knopf: \$2) consists largely of verses reprinted from an earlier volume with the same title. It was the epilogue to that first voyage to Europe from which the poet returns with a portfolio of classical memories: Antinous, Delphi, Poppies on Ludlow Castle, the dialect of Robert Burns, and finally the expected Envoi, which like the others is perfectly imitated, quotable, dead. Her later verses are American, even Nebraskan in their subjects, but their form is equally and coldly perfect. They give the impression of being cast, accurately, into a mould which was not intended for them; they lack redeeming inconsistencies and never vary from a pattern which is fixed by the first line. It might have been Miss Cather who inspired Boileau to write: "*Un style trop égal et toujours uniforme / En vain brille à nos yeux, il faut qu'il nous endorme.*"

THE LOVE-ROGUE, by Harry Kemp (12mo, 229 pages; Lieber & Lewis: \$1.75) is a rather free rendering of the Spanish drama of Tirso de Molina. The translator has been successful in catching the lyric qualities of the work, no less than the dramatic; he has done a welcome literary service in making available this source of all the multifarious Don Juan dramas, and has rounded out his assignment by a lively introduction and an exhaustive bibliography.

THE MODERN TRAVELLER, by Hilaire Belloc (illus., 12mo, 80 pages; Knopf: \$1.50) has satirical overtones of W. S. Gilbert and nonsensical overtones of Lewis Carroll, although it does not strike quite the same vibrant cords in either mood. The lines have a sting to them, and the entire expedition is a gay absurdity in verse of quick tempo and deft rhyming. The narrative lacks, however, in urbanity, and consequently—one hazards—in permanence.

RAW MATERIAL, by Dorothy Canfield (12mo, 302 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$2) is a score of instances out of human life, more trivial, surely, than true. The author states with smooth coyness her rather smug hope that these episodes will provoke original thought; but the conclusion of each is implicitly obvious in its beginning, and the desired meditations are suggested with all the energetic and unequivocal innuendo of a sermon. The author's manner, which seeks effusively to enlarge the importance of her subjects, completely neutralizes it. The sketches have neither the spareness and elasticity of an outline nor the elaborated warmth of a fully developed short story.

WINDOWS, by John Galsworthy (12mo, 91 pages; Scribners: \$1). In this play Galsworthy is to be seen at his best. Something of the social appeal that vitalizes *Justice* stands forth in this drama, yet underlying and over-spreading all is a subtle and skilfully woven strand of comedy that dominates the action. The author's technical expertness is nowhere better exemplified than in *Windows*, and only in a few instances have his characters been etched with more originality and reality.

THE MACHINE WRECKERS, by Ernst Toller, translated from the German by Ashley Dukes (12mo, 113 pages; Knopf: \$2) is a drama centring around the Luddite rebellion in England in the early part of the nineteenth century. The author, a communist poet and dramatist at present serving sentence in a Bavarian prison for taking part in the Munich uprisings, is not, like Hauptman, interested so much in the spectacle of the workers' rebellion against the machines, as in the blind groping of the workers to establish a brotherhood of man, the painful awakening of class consciousness in the birth throes of the modern industrial era. Borrowing freely from the dramas of Shakespeare, of Hauptman, of Gorki, Toller has re-created the bitter tragedy of the abortive English revolution killed so effectively by the Reform Bill of 1830.

THE LAW OF CITY PLANNING AND ZONING, by Frank Backus Williams (8vo, 738 pages; Macmillan: \$5) is an exhaustive examination of the legal basis for city planning in the United States, or rather, of the legal hindrances to a more complete development of civic utilities. Mr Williams' citation of foreign precedent, as well as our own more timid and tentative experiments in America, gives breadth to a discussion which is, alas! a little too technical for any one but the administrator or the practising city planner; but on the use of Mr Williams' data the orderly growth of our cities—to say nothing of their beauty—will not a little depend.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND MORALITY, by John Cowper Powys (12mo, 48 pages; Colbert: \$2.50). Mr Powys has the knowledge and the temperament for speculation. He concludes that the findings of psychoanalysis will lead to a relaxation of the sex-taboo and the god- or universe-taboo, and he discusses the "identity-lust" and a morality which disassociates sex-sensation from sin, declares that evil implies "either cruelty or malice," and retains "the imaginative sympathy of Christianity and the loyal tenderness of Christianity." His exposition is the more persuasive for being couched in varied rhythms, lively accents, and surprising images.

COMMENT

IN looking about us to discover what is wrong with the world for October, we decided that the most poignant ailment is a general vagueness as to the function of criticism. We hungered after some irreducible minimum, something of the nature of a *cogito, ergo sum*, which might serve at least as the opportunity for someone to come forth with a better one. And we felt safe in examining Aristotle, on the hypothesis that Aristotle is the formal literary critic whose work has stood the test of time most substantially.

The irreducible minimum seemed to be this: That the contribution which the Poetics makes to Greek literature is nothing other than the Poetics itself. That is, Aristotle's criticism did not serve to improve Greek poetry; it was simply the parallel, in ideological values, to the emotional values of Greek poetry, the translation of one set of terms into another set of terms. And criticism becomes an independent activity, the beauty of which consists purely in the power and subtlety of its formulations.

Next, we found tentatively three phases in which such formulations might conceivably manifest themselves, and these for convenience we called interpretation, orientation, and judgement.

By interpretation is meant the critic's function of seeing more deeply into the work of art than is to be expected of the layman. His programme here is to understand the author's purpose and the means utilized for effecting that purpose. This phase of criticism tends towards the technical approach, and is usually done best by critics who are themselves poets.

Orientation is the examination into the origin of the work of art. As such it is quite aside from the high road of criticism, but is probably justified in that it does throw new lights upon the art work itself. Under orientation come those various attempts to approach art through sociology, biology, ethnology, biography, politics, geography, economics—in short, the approach through history, the explanation of the art work as a *result*, as the miniature reflection of some larger condition. This method is not very valuable in accounting for excellence—which remains pretty much of an accident—but it has proved very useful in giving us further insight into why certain elements are to be found in a given work, and it is

especially adapted to the explanation of shortcomings and "taboos" in the artist's subject matter.

The third of the categories, judgement, involves the statement of a *corpus juris*, the clarification and justification of certain criteria whereby whole tons of art can be either admitted or rejected. Obviously, this is the most far-reaching aspect of criticism, and has always been the one which has proved the most disastrous to its devotees. It requires the critic to assert some clear relationship between art and life, entangling him in ethics, and even metaphysics.

Looking up, we discovered that a great deal of contemporary criticism simply could not be fitted into these categories. But a word was to hand which avoided the necessity of enlarging the categories—"colyumism." By colyumism we refer to that practice of writing about art which is based on the principle that just as one might be interested in hearing what President Coolidge felt about a certain book, so one might be interested in hearing what any one felt about a certain book. And so one might; but we question whether it is a branch of criticism proper. Colyumism is the outcome of the nineteenth century's search for individual freedom, a search which extended even to criticism, normally the most restrictive of pursuits. It is the sad end of impressionism, practised by epigones who have inherited their method of improvizing from an earlier generation which at least had enough vitality to invent the method. The colyumist (nor do we refer to those honest souls who have their columns and fill them: they perform their function in society, and we are not discriminating against such people when properly labelled; we are complaining rather against colyumism when it masks as portentous and portly criticism) the colyumist aims, by the "human touch" in his writing, to avoid the "aridity of dogmatism." Which would be sweet enough if it were at all possible to judge a work of art without relying on some implied principle of judgement. The formal critic attempts to hold such a principle up to the light of day, so that in time it may be disciplined and tempered; but the colyumist's basis of judgement remains as a latent assumption which, not being overtly expressed, is hardly likely to undergo much discipline in its formation. Thus, whereas one may square off to an authentic critic like Matthew Arnold in all awareness as to the issues involved, there are hundreds of critics to-day writing colyumistically whom it is much easier to forget than refute.

THE THEATRE

THIS (mid-August) is the *morte saison* of the theatre. It is the period when there are a great many openings and almost nothing that is worth seeing. It is the period when theatres are easy to rent and when they are consequently used for trying out all sorts of dubious and abortive productions with limited means at their disposal. It is also the period when the dramatic critics, after the theatrical intermission of the summer, return with appetites refreshed and appreciation revived. They enjoy an indifferent play more in August than they do a good one in May. If you do not believe this, read Mr Heywood Broun, who is under the impression that he has, since his vacation, witnessed a dazzling succession of splendid plays all distinguished by the most brilliant acting. But then August is the deadest, sultriest, stupidest, most prosaic month of the whole year and, in the dull stagnation of the town, one is perhaps inclined to be extravagantly grateful for the faintest phosphorescence of wit or the meagrest twitch of emotional animation.—I have, to be sure, seen two quite amusing and very well acted comedies—*TWEEDLES*, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson, and *IN LOVE WITH LOVE*, by Vincent Lawrence—but there is nothing particularly interesting to say about them; and I hope that the readers of *THE DIAL* will forgive me if I speak to them for a few moments instead about the comedies of the Restoration.

Once or twice every year in New York there is a solemn and pretentious revival of Sheridan. This year we had both *THE RIVALS* and *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL*. But why wouldn't it be a good plan, for a change, to revive Wycherley or Congreve instead? The comedy of the Restoration was much more interesting artistically (if a little less easy to put over dramatically) than the comedy of the late eighteenth century. Sheridan himself admits in *THE CRITIC* the tameness of the comedy of his own day, debauched by the importation from France of the *comédie larmoyante*, and what is most vivid and amusing in Sheridan is surely the part that comes nearest to the vein of Wycherley and Congreve. But Sheridan, in keeping English comedy wholesome in order not to offend the taste

of his time, had to sacrifice its peculiar force, which had lain in its thoroughgoing cynicism. The *SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL* is really little more than a domesticated version of Wycherley's *THE COUNTRY WIFE*, with the difference that in *THE COUNTRY WIFE* Joseph Surface is the hero instead of the villain. As it is, he remains about the most amusing thing in the later comedy and expounds his subversive point of view with far more wit and persuasiveness than quite accords with the vindication of a latter-day morality. In Wycherley, the rustic Mrs Pinchwife drops like ripe fruit for the city gallant, as Lady Teazle should have done, too, if Sheridan had carried out his comic logic.

Congreve and Wycherley were the supreme glorification of Joseph Surface's point of view, except that with them Joseph Surface was not under the necessity of becoming a hypocrite as well as a cynic: he is frankly out to seduce an attractive woman or to induce a rich one to marry him. And this, expressed with far greater intensity and with far more literary brilliance than Sheridan was ever able to muster, is what gives the comedy of the Restoration its unique importance. There is in English drama no other equally complete rendering of this comic point of view: even Maugham and Oscar Wilde have had to compromise with the domestic virtues. But in Congreve and in Wycherley all the conventional values are inverted: it is the holiday of the worldly and it has all the exhilaration of a holiday. What could be more gratifying and more cheerful than these husbands and wives who are never faithful, these young men whose intentions are never honourable, these coquettes who never want to marry? What could be more bracing than this contact with a world where the most primitive of human instincts are subjected in their nakedness to the scrutiny of the subtlest and most civilized intelligence, where there is no intermediary of the spirit to bridge the gulf between the mind and the body, where there is no obscurement by romantic emotion either savage or sentimental?

New York has now become sufficiently corrupt to enjoy these remarkable comedies. The Phoenix Society in London has recently revived Congreve's *LOVE FOR LOVE*. Why may we not do the same? Sheridan has become very tiresome and was never quite first-rate at best.

EDMUND WILSON

BEFORE A PICTURE BY PICASSO

IT was my great fortune just as I was finishing this book¹ to be taken by a friend to the studio of Pablo Picasso. We had been talking on our way of the lively arts; my companion denied none of their qualities, and agreed violently with my feeling about the bogus, what we called *le côté Puccini*. But he held that nothing is more necessary at the moment than the exercise of discrimination, that we must be on our guard lest we forget the major arts, forget even how to appreciate them, if we devote ourselves passionately, as I do, to the lively ones. Had he planned it deliberately he could not have driven his point home more deeply, for in Picasso's studio we found ourselves, with no more warning than our great admiration, in the presence of a masterpiece. We were not prepared to have an unframed canvas suddenly turned from the wall and to recognize immediately that one more had been added to the small number of the world's greatest works of art.

I shall make no effort to describe that painting. It isn't even important to know that I am right in my judgement. The significant and to me overwhelming thing was that the work was a masterpiece and altogether contemporary. It is a great pleasure to come upon an accredited masterpiece which preserves its authority, to mount the stairs and see the Winged Victory and *know* that it is good. But to have the same conviction about something finished a month ago, contemporaneous in every aspect yet associated with the great tradition of painting, with the indescribable thing we think of as the high seriousness of art and with a relevance not only to our life, but to life itself—that is a different thing entirely. For of course the first effect—after one had gone away and begun to be aware of effects—was to make one wonder whether it is worth while thinking or writing or feeling anything else. Whether, since the great arts are so capable of being practised to-day, it isn't sheer perversity to be satisfied with less. Whether praise of the minor arts isn't, at bottom, treachery to the great. I had always believed that there exists no such hostility between the two divisions of the arts which are honest—that the real opposition was between them, allied, and the polished fake. To that position I returned a few

¹ The Seven Lively Arts, by Gilbert Seldes, to be published by Harpers.

days later: it was a fortunate week altogether for I heard the *Sacre du Printemps* of Strawinsky the next day, and this tremendous shaking of the forgotten roots of being gave me reassurance.

More than that I am convinced that if one is going to live fully and not shut oneself away from half of civilized existence, one must care for both. It is possible to do well enough with either, and much depends on how one derives pleasure from them.

Most of the great works of art have reference to our time only indirectly—as they and we are related to eternity. And we require arts which specifically refer to our moment, which create the image of our lives. There are some twenty workers in literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and the dance who are doing this for us now—and doing it in such a manner as to associate our modern existence with that extraordinary march of mankind which we like to call the progress of humanity. It is not enough. In addition to them—in addition, not in place of them—we must have arts which, we feel, are for ourselves alone, which no one before us could have cared for so much, which no one after us will wholly understand. The picture by Picasso could have been admired by an unprejudiced critic a thousand years ago, and will be a thousand years hence. We require, for nourishment, something fresh and transient. It is this which makes jazz so much the characteristic art of our time and Jolson a more typical figure than Chaplin, who also is outside of time. There must be ephemera. Let us see to it that they are good.

The characteristic of the great arts is high seriousness—it occurs in Mozart and Aristophanes and Rabelais and Molière as surely as in Aeschylus and Racine. And the essence of the minor arts is high levity which existed in the *commedia dell' arte* and exists in Chaplin, which you find in the music of Berlin and Kern (not “funny” in any case). It is a question of exaltation, of carrying a given theme to the “high” point. The reference in a great work of art is to something more profound; and no trivial theme has ever required, or had, or been able to bear, a high seriousness in treatment. Avoiding the question of creative genius, what impresses us in a work of art is the intensity or the pressure with which the theme, emotion, sentiment, even “idea” is rendered. Assuming that a blow from the butt of a revolver is not exactly artistic presentation, that “effectiveness” is not the only criterion, we have the beginning of a criticism of aesthetics. We know that the method does count, the

creativeness, the construction, the form. We know also that while the part of humanity which is fully civilized will always care for high seriousness it will be quick to appreciate the high levity of the minor arts. There is no conflict. The battle is only against solemnity which is not high, against ill-rendered profundity, against the shoddy and the dull.

I have allowed myself to catalogue my preferences; it is possible to set the basis of them down in impersonal terms, in propositions:

That there is no opposition between the great and the lively arts.

That both are opposed in the spirit to the middle or bogus arts.

That the bogus arts are easier to appreciate, appeal to low and mixed emotions, and jeopardize the purity of both the great and the minor arts.

That the lively arts as they exist in America to-day are entertaining, interesting, and important.

That with a few exceptions these same arts are more interesting to the adult cultivated intelligence than most of the things which pass for art in cultured society.

That there exists a "genteel tradition" about the arts which has prevented any just appreciation of the popular arts, and that these have therefore missed the corrective criticism given to the serious arts, receiving instead only abuse.

That therefore the pretentious intellectual is as much responsible as any one for what is actually absurd and vulgar in the lively arts.

That the simple practitioners and simple admirers of the lively arts being uncorrupted by the bogus preserve a sure instinct for what is artistic in America.

And now a detour around two of the most disagreeable words in the language: highbrow and lowbrow. Pretence about these words and what they signify makes an understanding of the lively arts impossible. The discomfort and envy which make these words vague, ambiguous, and contemptuous need not concern us; for they represent a real distinction, two separate ways of apprehending the world, as if it were palpable to one and visible to the other. In connexion with the lively arts the distinction is clear, and involves the third division, for the lively arts are created and admired chiefly by the class known as lowbrows, are patronized and, to an extent enjoyed, by the highbrows; and are treated as impostors and

as contemptible vulgarism by the middle class, those who invariably are ill-at-ease in the presence of great art until it has been approved by authority, those whom Dante rejected from Heaven and Hell alike, who blow neither hot nor cold, the Laodiceans.

Be damned to these last and all their tribe! There exists a small number of people who care intensely for the major and the minor arts and they are always being accused of "not caring really" for the lively ones, of pretending to care, or of running away from "the ancient wisdom and austere control" of Greek architecture or from the intense passion of Dante, the purity of Bach, the great totality of what humankind has created in art. It is claimed, and here the professional lowbrow agrees, that these others *cannot* care for the lively arts, unless they romanticize them and find things in them which aren't there—at least not for the "real" patrons of those arts.

Aren't they there, these secondary qualities? I take for example a sport instead of an art. Nothing about baseball interests me except the newspaper reports of the games, so I speak without prejudice. In the days of Babe Ruth I took the sun in the bleachers once and saw that heavy hitter do exactly what he had to do on his first appearance for the day—a straight, business-like home run, much appreciated by the crowd, as any expert well-timed job is appreciated by Americans. The game that day went against the Yankees; they were two runs behind in the ninth and with two men on base, Ruth came up again. Again he hit a home run. And the crowd roaring its joy in victory exhaled two sighs, for the dramatic quality of the blow and for the lovely spiralling of the ball in its flight over the fence. "A beauty—a beauty"—you heard the expression a thousand times—and "He knows *when* to hit them." They would have roared too if he had hit a single which, muffed, would have brought in the winning run. But they would not have said, "a beauty"—and as far as I am concerned that is proof enough that the appreciation of aesthetic qualities is universal. It isn't, thank Heaven, always put into words.

Take as another instance the fame of the Rath Brothers. They are acrobats who do difficult things, but there are others doing much the same sort of thing without approaching the *réclame* of these two. Their appearance of ease is a delight, there is no strain, no swelling muscles, no visible exploitation of strength. The Hellenic philosopher who held that the arrow shot from the bow is never in motion, but at rest from second to second at the succeeding

points of its trajectory, might have seen some ancient forerunners of these athletes, for each of their movements seems at once a sculptured rest and a passage into another pose. And that is precisely the quality which vaudeville and revue audiences care for, and in a groping way recognize as distinctive and fine. They may think that Greeks have been candy-vendors since the beginning of time and that Marathon was a race-course; but they *know* what they like.

I do not see, therefore, that recognition of these aspects of the gay arts can in any way detract from actual enjoyment—on the contrary it adds. You see Charlie about to throw a mop; the boss enters; without breaking the line of his movement Charlie swoops to the floor and begins to scrub. The first, the essential thing, is the fun in the dramatic turn; but what makes it funny is that there is no jerk, no break in the line—the two things are so interwoven that you cannot separate them. And if any one were actually entirely unconscious of the line, the fun would be lost; it would be Ham and Bud, not Charlie, for such a spectator. The question is only to what degree one can be conscious of it—for I have known intellectuals who so reduced Charlie to angles that the angles no longer made them laugh. They have done the same with Massine and Nijinsky; they have followed the score so closely that they haven't heard the music and they correspond exactly to the man who bets on the game and doesn't see the play.

The life of the mind is supposed to be a terrible burden, ruining all the pleasures of the senses. This idea is carefully supported by "mental workers" (as they call themselves) and by the brainless. The truth is, of course, that when the mind isn't afflicted by a desire to be superior, it does nothing but multiply all the pleasures, and the intelligent spectator, in all conscience, feels and experiences more than the dull one. To such a spectator the lively arts have a validity of their own. He cares for them for themselves, and their relation to the other arts does not matter. It is only because the place of the common arts in decent society is always being called into question that the answer needs to be given. I do not suppose that my answer is final; but I feel sure that it must be given, as mine is, from the outside.

It happens that what we call folk-music, folk-dance, and the folk-arts in general have only a precarious existence among us; the "reasons" are fairly obvious. And the popular substitutes for these

arts are so much under our eyes and in our ears that we fail to recognize them as decent contributions to the richness and intensity of our lives. The result, strange as it may appear to devotees of culture, is that our major arts suffer. The poets, painters, composers who withdraw equally from the main stream of European tradition and from the untraditional natural expressions of America, have no sources of strength, no material to work with, no background against which they can see their shadows.

At the same time the contempt we have for the lively arts hurts them as much as it hurts us. We have all heard of the "great artist of the speaking stage" who will not lower himself by appearing on the screen; as familiar is the vaudevillian who will call himself an artist and has hankerings for the "legit"; we have seen good dancers become bad actors, good blackface comedians develop alarming tendencies toward singing sentimental ballads in whisky-tenor voices, good comic-strip artists beginning to do bad book illustrations. The "step upward" is never in the direction of superior work, but towards a more rarefied acclaim.

As these artists suffer under opprobrium and try to avoid it by touching the field of the *faux bon*, their work becomes more and more refined, and genteel. The broadness, rough play, vitality, diminish gradually until a sort of Drama League seriousness and church-sociable good form are both satisfied. And all the more's the pity for the thinning out of our lives goes on from day to day and these lively arts are the only things which can keep us hard and robust and gay. In America where there is no recognized upper class to please, no official academic requirements to meet, the one tradition of gentility is as lethal as all the conventions of European society, and unlike those of Europe, our tradition provides no nourishment for the artist. It is negative all the way through.

In spite of gentility the lively arts have held to something a little richer and gayer than the polite ones. They haven't dared to be frank for a spurious sense of decency is backed by the police, and this limitation has hurt them; but it has made them sharp and clever by forcing their wit into deeper channels. There still exists a broadness in slapstick comedy and in burlesque, and once in a while vast figures of Rabelaisian comedy occur. For the most part the lively arts are inhibited by the necessity to provide "nice clean fun for the whole family"—a regrettable, but inevitable penalty for their universal appeal. For myself I should like to see a touch

more of grossness and of licence in these arts; it would be a sign that the blood hadn't gone altogether pale, and that we can still roar cheerfully at dirty jokes, when they are funny.

What Europeans feel about American art is exactly the opposite of what they feel about American life. Our life is energetic, varied, constantly changing; our art is imitative, anaemic (exceptions in both cases being assumed). The explanation is that few Europeans see our lively arts, which are almost secret to us, like the mysteries of a cult. Here the energy of America does break out and finds artistic expression for itself. Here a wholly unrealistic, imaginative presentation of the way we think and feel is accomplished. No single artist has yet been great enough to do the whole thing—but together the minor artists of America have created the American art. And if we could for a moment stop wanting our artistic expression to be *necessarily* in the great arts—it will be that in time—we should gain infinitely.

Because, in the first place, the lively arts have never had criticism. The box-office is gross; it detects no errors, nor does it sufficiently encourage improvement. Nor does abuse help. There is good professional criticism in journals like *Variety*, *The Billboard*, and the moving picture magazines—some of them. But the lively arts can bear the same continuous criticism which we give to the major, and if the criticism itself isn't bogus there is no reason why these arts should become self-conscious in any pejorative sense. In the second place the lively arts which require little intellectual effort will more rapidly destroy the bogus than the major arts ever can. The close intimacy between high seriousness and high levity, the thing that brings together the extremes touching at the points of honesty and simplicity and intensity—will act like the convergence of two armies to squeeze out the bogus. And the moment we recognize in the lively arts our actual form of expression, we will derive from them the same satisfaction which people have always derived from an art which was relevant to their existence. The nature of that satisfaction is not easily described. One thing we know of it—that it is pure. And in the extraordinarily confused and chaotic world we live in we are becoming accustomed to demand one thing, if nothing else—that the elements presented to us, however they are later confounded with others, shall be of the highest degree in their kind, of an impeccable purity.

GILBERT SELDES

MUSICAL CHRONICLE

WERE the queen of music a light divinity, like as not Professor Sam Eliot, Jr of Smith would have been hearing her, the last past months, play all sorts of nice little things to him upon her harp. Being not one of the looser, but of the graver Olympians, it is probable that she has merely been leaning over him from out a window in heaven and addressing hallelujahs and salves, gaudias and pax vobiscums from the pipes of a concert-organ; fluting rapturously upon him many a brilliant morning, and encircling his front many a sunset hour with tender-breathed thanks. Some marvellous expression of her gratitude, assuredly, she has been making him. Few of late have been kindlier than he to her congregation upon the earth, or more deserving of her smiles. Not himself of the musical confession, he has nevertheless most admirably supported her cause. It seems he is a member of that race which is falling more rapidly than leaves do in November, or Nordics in the minds of neo-Hegelians: the race of American college professors who have not yet permitted the environing elements to annihilate intellectual curiosity and courage in them. In the course of the last year this young man persuaded the class about to be graduated from Smith to give Andreyev's *The Black Maskers* as its commencement play; persuaded the faculty to sanction the heterodox choice; and, most inspiredly of all, procured the right to invite a certain unknown young composer to supply the incidental music so richly invoked by the dramatist. In this fashion, he built well; placed Polyhymnia in his debt. For he made himself the immediate producing cause of one of the most important events in the life of music in America. He made himself the midwife to an event which commences a new time in it.

We have proof that, at length, for the first time since the colonization of the Atlantic seaboard, an whole creative musicianship has appeared among the Americans. The audiences which assisted at the three performances of *The Black Maskers* in Northampton in June heard an incidental music poorly performed, muffled by the two circumstances that it was sounded from behind the stage, and by a scratch body of instrumentalists; and nevertheless thrilling and winged. Only those of the auditors quite shut in sensibility could

have failed to perceive, through the muffling matter, the living stuff of tones. Music was there; there was an intention which transpired, even off the instruments of amateurs. The nine numbers supplied by the composer brought perfectly to Andreyev's drama the extension through music required by him. They are a re-creation, in a sister medium, of the play itself; flowing from a vision of it so profound and exact that it seems the composer must have stood while composing close to the point at which the dramatist stood when he made the dialogue. From these pieces, we receive a joy and satisfaction not incomparable to that which we receive from the score of *Pelleas*, from the *Psalms* of Bloch, the *Möricke-songs* of Wolf, or from any other musical composition in which a composer has actually created toward a poet: stood upon his own shoe-leather, and enormously enriched with his proper life-blood a literary expression. They have indeed the wild sinister pulse of Andreyev's dolorous fantasy, the sardonic and anguished cries, the flow of inky depressive current. Their tones utter, too, the chaos, the sorrow, the baffled frenzy of the mind which can no longer harmonize its visions, its many cruel, irreconcilable truths and lies disrupted in doubt. The music has the indefinite, vague outline of bitter, endless revery, of Hamlet-like melancholia streaming densely silently through rocky wastes and mocking perspectives underneath a sky eternally charged with murk. Lorenzo calls his musicians to play; and what sounds from their pieces gibbers and cavorts and shrieks like humiliating, destructive thoughts that will not down. A wedding-procession is organized; and wedding music is played fraught with the atrocious cries and furious irony consequent to a suddenly shattered dream, a suddenly yawning abysmal vision. More than the words, the music of Lorenzo's song curses life and confesses Satan. Music comes full of chill metaphysical brooding; deathly beautiful with the wind from out the inhuman spaces of the universe; stark and black with the sense of crucifixion. And last, while the flames of death beat back the storm of black maskers, the orchestra chants and exults and is transfigured with the cleansing, releasing resolving deed.

A psychic maturity, freshness of spirit, living culture, and technical control have opened into the realm of music in America. The music to *The Black Maskers* is no happy hit such as many slight talents make once in their lives; accidents liable as not never to repeat themselves again. The author is an artist. His workmanship

declares him marvellously in control of his resources, capable of producing hard form which reveals itself the larger the more it is heard. Broken as it sounds, elusive and mysterious as it is in outline, full of abrupt brutal resolutions and strange new sounds and sudden suspensions and blinding blurs, his work has a fine clarity and solidity of form. There is not a consonance in the work; the ideas are subtle and delicate; nevertheless, we do not go lost in this free, ultramodern style.

A living flow informs the structure. The clangorous and ironic passages subside naturally into the weeping, dolorous, soft ones. Nor has the music form in the American manner: at the expense of robustness and vibrancy. There is great strength in the movements; powerfully pulsing rhythms; long melodic lines that flow and continue and extend in beauty; no padding, no waste. The orchestral dress, too, is masterly. There were twenty-nine or thirty instruments playing; the score calls for no more; yet musicians in the audience found themselves deceived as to the number and character of the components of the band. One, an expert, went behind the stage looking for bass-clarinets and contrabassoons; and found merely clarinets and fagots: the brilliant handling of the lower registers of these common instruments had caused the mistake. Indeed, perhaps only one element which might have been present in this art was wanting. That, was the absolute individuality of style. Not that there was any plagiarism or even derivative material in the score. Except for some moments, mostly in the final fire-music, when vague resemblances to Moussorgsky and to Bloch appear, the music is never reminiscent. It merely wants that final sharpness of contour which the musics written by composers in the fulness of their maturity beget. But taking into consideration the youth of the composer, we see that it could not possibly have put in appearance at this early time. It is thoroughly normal, even by the laws of genius, that it should have absented itself.

Roger Huntington Sessions, the composer of this beautiful, moving work, is indeed still in his twenty-seventh year. He was born at the close of 1896 in Hadley, Massachusetts, the residence of his family during nearly two centuries. Whether or not there were musicians among his ancestors is not known. There were clergymen, however; his maternal grandfather was Episcopal Bishop of western New York. Sessions matriculated at Harvard at the age of fourteen; was editor for a while of the Harvard Musical Maga-

zine. After graduation, he went to the Yale Music School to study under Horatio Parker. He remained three years in New Haven; then received the appointment of instructorship in the history and theory of music at Smith College. While at Smith, he found time to come to New York and study under Ernest Bloch. When the Cleveland Conservatory was organized around Bloch, two and a half years ago, Sessions accepted an engagement as instructor in theory and orchestration, and has been associated with the institution since. A number of compositions preceded *The Black Maskers*; among them a symphony. But the Andreyev music constitutes an *Opus 1*.

The hour which strikes in it leaves us still a little stunned. Only a brief while since, we had been wondering whether the arrival of a musician with enough of chaos in him to make a world were truly possible in America; wishing indeed for the tone such an apparition would give to life, and nevertheless scarcely daring to expect to witness it in our own day. Signs of an efflorescence in the musical life were not wanting. Many young earnest of future performance had been made; and some were more than promises, merely: respectable and heartening performances. Nevertheless, the ripened, sovereign inner force was not yet present. Itself is such a miracle that one could not predict its arrival. And yet, that golden gift is among us to-day. About it, the musical life reconstitutes itself; gets a new gravity and solidness. It comes, as it must inevitably have come, as the voice of the living young people in a compromised and shoddy world. No Indian or negro, or bastard Scottish tunes. Absolutely, no red white and blue. Rather, the grey on grey of Russia. That, is more American. The music speaks an hundred ironic, pensive, conflicting moods. And we feel strangely at home; strangely rich and potent.—Whether Roger Sessions' gift is entirely for the theatre, we do not as yet know. The two best of the numbers, the turbulent chaos of Lorenzo's thought in Scene III, the prelude to Act II, symphonic as they are, were inspired directly by the vision of the play. But that fact is not necessarily significant. He may find himself even more richly in the absolute forms. In any case, it does not much matter. Sessions goes to a great career, whether he goes to the opera, or the ballet, or the symphony, or to all three. It is we who are to be congratulated. He himself is good luck.

PAUL ROSENFELD

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